Confessions of a Bad Student • Book Rap • Teacher Testing 1871

NOW AND THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE
CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Education in Appalachia

My most influential teacher by Wilma Dykeman, Fred Chappell, Jim Wayne Miller, Robert Morgan, Marilou Awiakta and more

A Meditation on Eliot Wigginton

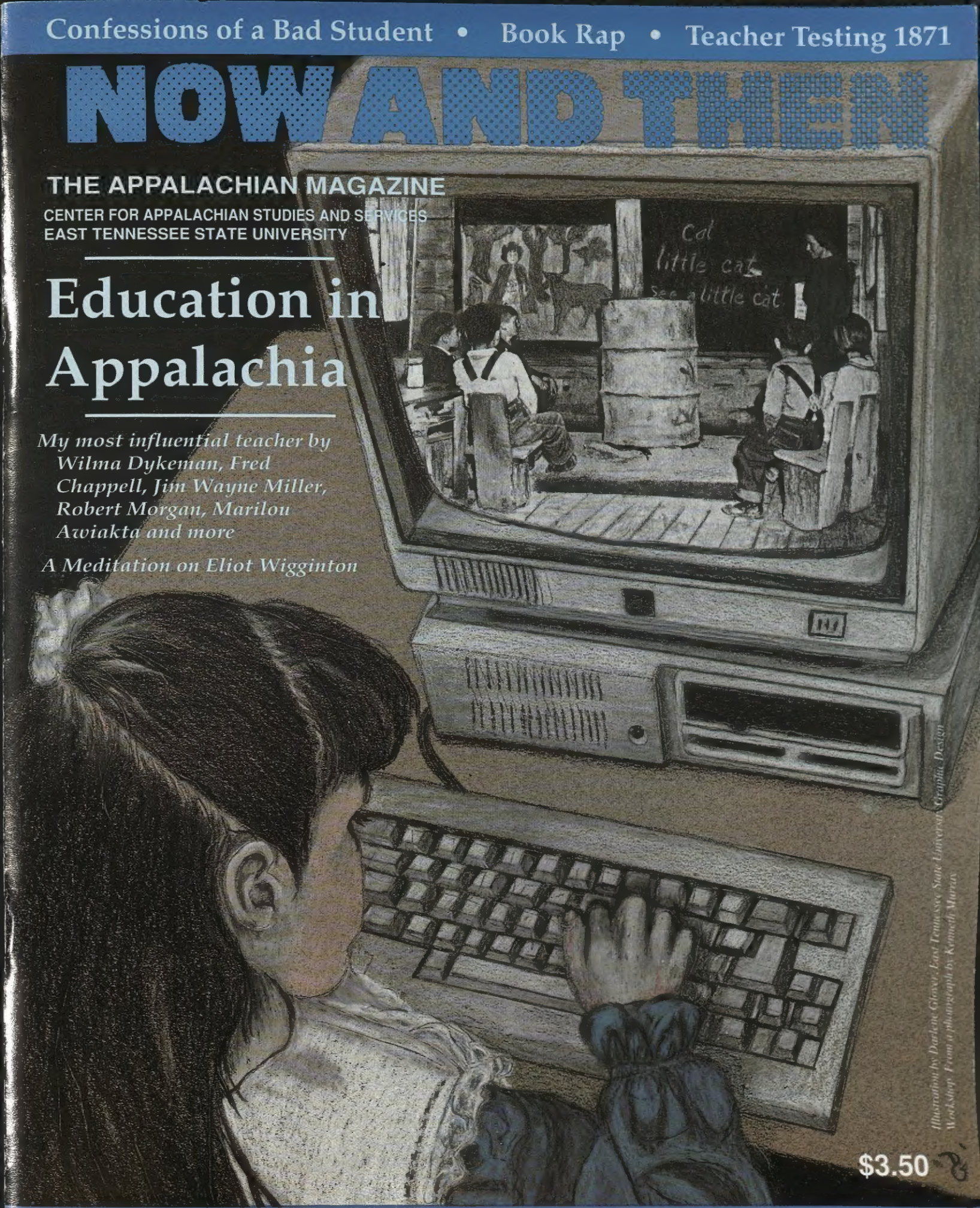

Illustration by Darlene Glover, East Tennessee State University Graphic Design Workshop. From a photograph by Kenneth Murray

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Articles • Interviews • Stories • Poetry • Reviews • Photos

Meeting a Dropped-Out Student in a Bar, the Teacher Makes a Little Speech

I think I want you to see
your mother squinting
at the letter from the congressman
which she cannot read
because she never learned to read.
Where do you stand on this?

Or how about trying to write down
the devil story your grandfather told
a year before he died, and which
you sort of remember
and want to tell several people
who would enjoy it
but you have no art in telling
and you are left with nothing but paper
and a pencil
and no skill at that kind of thing.
Where do you stand on this?

Remember that smallish woman
who taught you back at school,
who sometimes surprised you with what she knew
about what you thought only you knew,
and who could say it so clearly,
and who, when the class was almost over,
could hold you in your seat
with stories that made you laugh
because they were your stories,
only better?
Where do you stand on this?

Over your beer after softball games,
over your boredoms of evenings,
over the sorrowful laughters of TV,
do you sometimes wish for stories
that go somewhere, that give you someone
to learn or to like or to hate?
Over the soaps do you sometimes
find yourself thinking
that the world is something better,
that it is birds, and rain, and old cars
driven by women who speak Greek?
Where do you stand on this?
And when you're finished standing,
where do you go?
What do you plan to do?

—Richard Hague

Richard Hague was born and raised in Steubenville, Ohio. He teaches in Cincinnati. This summer he will teach at the Appalachian Center for Poets and Writers and the Appalachian Writers Workshop in Hindman, Ky.

Wanda Lee Sergent, 10, who is in the second grade. Harlan County, Ky., 1946. Photo by Russell Lee. *National Archives*

"For most mountaineers, education took place within the familiar setting of the family and community, and this type of education provided continuity for the culture, reinforcing traditional values and beliefs."

Ronald Eller, in *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers* (1982)

Spring 1993
Volume 10, Number 1

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NOW AND THEN

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Summer 1993
THE CIVIL WAR & BEYOND

Fall 1993
STORYTELLING OF APPALACHIA

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Jean Haskell Speer

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and who could say it so clearly,
and who, when the class was almost over,
could hold you in your seat
with stories that made you laugh
because they were your stories,
only better?
Where do you stand on this?

Over your beer after softball games,
over your boredoms of evenings,
over the sorrowful laughters of TV,
do you sometimes wish for stories
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Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

Developing Intellectual Resources

I joined the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services in January as the new director. The enthusiasm and sense of challenge that brought me to the position increase each day as I learn more about why this program is recognized as "an accomplished center of excellence." I have spent my first month in this position getting an education in the processes and procedures of a new university culture and a new part of Appalachia that I now call home. So, education is a fitting theme for the first issue of *Now and Then* I am privileged to introduce. The education theme is timely for our center, too, because we have just launched a new minor in Appalachian Studies at East Tennnessee State University.

Education has long been an issue of concern in Appalachia. Historically, the region has been seen as a place lacking in educational opportunity and accomplishment. However, in recent years we have reclaimed much of the history of education in the mountains and discovered potent reasons for the educational lag in our region where it has occurred. This issue of *Now and Then* adds to our historical understanding of the importance of education for many people of the region and ways in which education was often denied them. Some of the memories of schooling in Appalachia in this issue are heartening and inspiring; others are bittersweet, some bitterly painful.

Educational issues of concern in contemporary Appalachia center on disparities in school funding that lead to deficits in educational quality, a struggle over values in deciding school curriculum, and how to balance needs for diversity and needs for some common intellectual heritage. In Appalachia, schools are frequently sites of cultural struggle; if we are good students of what happens in the schools of our region — controversies over textbook selection, sex education, appropriate behavior, funding, curricular tracking — we will learn much about the tensions that underlie our regional communities and the hopes and fears of children, parents, teachers, administrators and community citizens.

In a time when most of the educational enterprise in this country is under attack from many quarters, we need to understand why education is important and open our eyes to the various ways in which we may be educated. The Austrian psychologist, Viktor Frankl, recounts in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, the horrors of his years in a Nazi concentration camp. From his experience, he learned that those prisoners who survived were those who had the most intellectual resources; when all else was taken from them — family, work, status, even the hair on their bodies — what was stored in their minds remained. The amount and quality of those intellectual resources often meant the difference between life and death. I have often reminded my students that education not only prepares them for their successes in life and careers, but, more important, for coping with those times of suffering inevitable in all our lives.

Frankl also reminds us that learning comes from many sources, including what he calls the "other-wise." Students, especially in Appalachia, need to appreciate the kind of wisdom that may be gleaned from those who may have little or no formal education. Songs and stories, material objects and music, and a host of other cultural performances are valuable "texts" for learning about the human experience in Appalachia.

We hope this issue of our magazine encourages you to be involved in and support education throughout the region. If you would like to support the work of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services and our new educational enterprise in the Appalachian Studies minor, please become a Friend of CASS.

— Jean Haskell Speer, Director

Now and Then Magazine

Terrors and Multiculturalism

Everyone can remember their best teachers, their worst teachers, their most humiliating moments, the terrible injustices they saw when they were children. Education is tied up with the growing up experience, in learning about who one is in the world. The sense of themselves that children develop in school, however inaccurate, is something that stays with them always. Terrors, pivotal moments, epiphanies, remain remarkably vivid. In this issue, we tap those powerful memories with some of the most evocative writing we've ever published by some of our favorite writers and educators.

In great part, the memories that people relate for this issue are the kinds of experiences that people everywhere can remember. But growing up in Appalachia adds specific challenges for students. They must face ignorance, prejudice and misinformation about their region. Many of those who responded to our questions about their own education say that they now wish their culture and history had been included in their lessons.

These writers might be just as grateful that they didn't have an education in their own culture when they look at the negative and misinformed material written about Appalachia — even in recent books. Librarian Mark Ellis reviews reference works for us, both general encyclopedias and regional and cultural encyclopedias. He finds astonishing amounts of unsubstantiated stereotypical information in highly regarded books. Roberta Herrin, who is on sabbatical to study children's literature, reviews recently published Appalachian children's books. While she finds much to admire, she also finds books filled with damaging, inaccurate images of the region and its people. The trouble is that the media praise the worst offenders and shower them with recognition, including the prestigious Newbery Award.

We can count on some realism and positivism about Appalachia, at least from those working within the region. The Appalachian centers, such as the one that publishes *Now and Then*, all work to convey accurate information. Publications including *Appalachian Heritage* and *Appalachian Journal* as well as *Now and Then* strive to show this region in all of its complexity. There is Appalshop, the home-grown media production center in Whitesburg, Ky., and Foxfire, the educational system which has extended to

many places in the nation. Of course, Foxfire has had its image problems lately. The troubles of its visionary founder, Eliot Wigginton, are painful for those who have admired his work. But because it is important to bring issues that provoke strong feelings into the open, we asked for the thoughts of Larry Osborne, a psychologist at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., who has worked with the Foxfire program. He shares a perceptive, thoughtful meditation that is, we hope, a part of the healing process.

Another educational issue with far-reaching consequences is education reform in Kentucky. The program was mandated by the state Supreme Court in 1989. Eastern Kentucky stood to benefit the most. This reform is one of the most exciting programs in the country. Journalist Nancy Adams looks at how it has worked thus far in one school in Whitesburg, Ky. She finds that the politics that have bedeviled Eastern Kentucky school systems for years are still at work, hampering true reform.

We couldn't have an issue on education without discussing multicultural education. We feel safe claiming that we knew the value of multiculturalism long before it became trendy and suspect that we'll still be fighting for representation of overlooked groups long after the word falls into disuse. Two contributors, Raleigh Wynn and Jean Haskell Speer, have thoughtfully addressed the issues of cultural diversity in this issue.

An education issue seems like a most appropriate place to welcome Dr. Speer, a respected educator, as the new director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services. Before coming to the center, she was director of Appalachian Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Her interests include the politics of culture, folk traditions in Appalachia and elsewhere, public policy in Appalachia and comparative studies of mountain cultures worldwide. She is author of *The Appalachian Photographs of Earl Palmer* (University Press of Kentucky 1990) and co-editor of *Performance, Culture, and Identity* (Praeger 1992). She is also a native of Memphis whose early roots are in East Tennessee. It's a pleasure to welcome her back.

— Pat Arnow, Editor

Carroll Reece Museum

The Process and Product of Art

In addition to its regular art and history displays, the Carroll Reece Museum offers a series of teaching programs for children and adults. These programs are designed to enhance understanding of art and the process of producing art.

Throughout the academic calendar year, the Reece offers an after-school art program designed to supplement classroom art instruction for third through sixth grade students. Each Thursday afternoon "Artsploration" challenges and piques the imaginations of young people through classroom projects that cover a range of subjects from sculpture to printmaking to art appreciation.

Each month the students explore a new area of visual art. We use exhibits on display at the museum as visual aids and examples of possible solutions to a challenging project.

Another regular offering of the Reece, one designed for both children and adults, is the "Artists In Action" series. This program brings artists into the museum to show how they produce their work. The museum staff invites artists who use a variety of media and techniques. As they demonstrate their work, the artists discuss with museum visitors what they are doing. Painting, sculpture and crafts are among the media demonstrated.

Artists In Action is offered on the second Tuesday of each month, September through May, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to stop by and observe the process and to ask questions of the artist as they watch work evolve.

A service offered by the museum is the organization of study tours to view major exhibits that do not come to the Johnson City area. During the past year, trips were arranged to the Etruscan and Ottoman Empire shows in Memphis, and to the *Seeds of Change* and *Art of the American Indian* exhibits in Washington, D.C. These trips were preceded by lectures that provided participants and other interested individuals with information on the history and culture of the people and times shown in these exhibits.

Museum staff also offer tours. Tours are tailored to the requests or focus of the group visiting the museum. In addition, staff provides outreach programming to interested groups. Staff will discuss museum-related materials or the individual staff member's area of specialty.

The Reece Museum is on the campus and is open seven days a week. A quarterly newsletter listing the exhibits, events and allied programming is available at the museum or by writing the museum at East Tennessee State University, Box 70660, Johnson City, TN 37614, or calling 615-929-4392.

— Blair H. White, Curator

Words

The grinch stole Christmas a different way
each time my grandfather cracked the bright book,
feigned a word knowing. That was OK.
I loved those strange sudden veerings,
the flux of language surging, tumbling
one page to another, words appearing,
disappearing with every new telling.

Only later I learned the truth:
those dull grammar school mornings
of Dick and Jane, plodding through
each unsurprising sentence, coming to words
trapped in dry ink, no ignorant
tobacco-breathed voice to free them.

— Ron Rash

Ron Rash is a winner of the General Electric Foundation Younger Writers Award. He has been published in ***Southern Review***, ***Pennsylvania Review***, ***Southern Humanities Review*** *and* ***The Journal***. *He teaches at Tri-County Tech in Pendleton, S.C*

Archives of Appalachia

Teacher Testing 1871

Reading the minutes of the Board of Education for Washington County, Tenn., reveals that some educational issues from the 1870s have carried forward to the present — issues such as how to pay for it and how to hire competent teachers.

In December 1871, the education board realized the need for additional funds to operate the schools. The board petitioned the County Court to levy a tax of 2 mills (two-tenths of a cent) per $100 of taxable property in the county. The board agreed that if the court refused to levy the tax that an election should be held to "let the People decide by ballot if they will or will not tax themselves to educate their children." The County Court responded by levying a one-mill-and-a-half tax with proceeds to be placed in the education fund.

Shortly after its organization in 1871, the board devised a 19-point list of rules to govern the conduct of teachers in the classroom. Teachers were responsible for "the neat appearance of the schoolroom, furniture, and pupils, enjoining upon the latter cleanliness of person and dress, and abstinence from the use of tobacco or snuff on the premises, not only by precept, but by example." Furthermore, the board required teachers to "demand of their pupils a strict conformity with the usages of politeness and civility." The 15th rule warned that "[n]o teacher shall be sustained in permitting or introducing into the school sectarian views in religion, or partisan, or sectional views in politics." The board required that all teachers must pass an examination covering several subject areas to be certified to teach within the county.

In September 1871, the Washington County, Tenn., Board of Education implemented procedures for the examination of teaching applicants. They were particularly concerned with careful examination of applicants with regard to spelling, pronunciation and accents. The written test given to teaching applicants in 1875 follows. Each applicant was required to pay $1.50 in order to take the test. Spellings and punctuation are as in the original.

DIRECTIONS

1. Write with pen and ink.
2. Write on one side of the paper only.
3. Number each page and question, as the original.
4. Answer each question separately.
5. In Arithmetic give complete solutions.

No. I - Arithmetic

1. What is number?
2. Multiply 2.75 by 1.28 and dive the product by .0011.
3. 2 1/3 x 1 4/5 ÷ 4 1/5 = How many?
4. Find the Greatest Common Divisor and the Least Common Multiple of 18, 24, 30, 36.
5. Bought corn at 45 cents per bushel and sold it at 60 cents per bushel, what per cent did I gain?
6. If I sell 1/2 of an article for 3/4 of its cost, what is gained per cent?
7. What is the value in current funds of $250 gold when gold is 147%?
8. Find the interest on 50 cents for 3 years 3 months 3 days at 3 1/2 per cent.

No. II. - Grammar

1. Give a synopsis of the verb "set," voice, mode, tense, number and person.
2. What verb have no voice? Give examples. What is voice?
3. Give the plural of knight-templar; of genius, of cherub.
4. Correct: He was the first who entered. It is her. Let you and I remain.
5. Give a list of the parts of speech in regular order.

No. III - Geography

1. What is the use of latitude and longitude?
2. What is the cause of day and night?
3. Where is Chicago? Cincinnatti? St. Louis? Sacramento? Sitka?
4. How are civilized nations distinguished?
5. Draw a map of Tennessee showing mountains, rivers and towns.

No. IV - U.S. History

1. What is history?
2. How were Kentucky and Utah settled?
3. What was the Missouri Compromise?
4. How long did the war of Secession last? Where and when did Lee surrender?
5. What offices constitute the Cabinets of the President?

No. V. - Reading

1. Name the different kinds of composition.
2. Name the organs of speech.
3. Give the difference between force and stress.
4. What is the rhetorical pause?
5. How do you read a soliloquy?

No. VI. - Spelling

1. What is a primitive word?
2. What is a digraph?
3. Is long "u" a simple or compound element? If compound give analysis.
4. What is the primary and what is the secondary accent?
5. Correct the orthography of the following words: also divide each into the proper syllables indicating the sound of each vowel by the proper symbol: Deguereotype, mischievous, finanse, sacriligeous, fasecious, cillindrical.

No. VII. - Writing

1. What is an element?
2. What is a principle?
3. Make the principles.
4. Give the rule for shading.
5. What is a space?
6. How do you teach penmanship?
7. What System of Penmanship do you prefer and why?

No. VIII. - Theory and Practice

1. How should a recitation be conducted, and what are its chief objects?
2. What is your general plan of governing school?
3. In what cases should corporeal punishment be resorted to? When should a pupil be expelled?
4. What other punishment do you use?
5. Define deduction; induction; objective, subjective.
6. How do you give pupils moral instruction?
7. What are the objects of education?
8 What is the object of text-books?
9. What is meant by the natural order of educating the faculties?
10. For what is a teacher responsible?
11. Define the difference between seeing and observing.

— Norma Myers, head, Archives of Appalachia and Marie Tedesco, public service archivist

Source: Minutes of the Board of Education, Washington County, Tenn., 1871-1888. Washington County Court Records. Transcribed by Georgia Greer.

Breach of Promise

School Reform in Letcher County, Kentucky

by Nancy Adams

When it looked like the Kentucky legislature would pass the landmark Education Reform Act in 1990, Regina Sizemore decided to quit teaching her two grade-school age sons at home and enroll them in public school. She had kept them out because she didn't like the rigid structure of traditional schools.

With education reform, she believed that students would have more freedom to learn at their own pace and to nurture a love of learning. She picked West Whitesburg Elementary because she thought it was a good school with good teachers, and she admired the leadership of its principal, Charlene Collins.

With guidance from Collins, the school began to adjust to the new reforms. Teachers voted to start a school council, the first in Letcher County. By 1996, each school must have a council made up of three teachers, two parents and the principal. Parents elected Regina Sizemore as one of their council representatives.

The council studied the new law. Each week, they met for hours, and called state officials when they had questions. "I felt so good about that council," Sizemore says. "We had trust, no rivalry, and the same goal: to make West Whitesburg better. I felt such promise."

Bill Bishop

Regina Sizemore, former West Whitesburg School council member, once again schools her children at home.

Today, three years later, Sizemore has withdrawn her children from West Whitesburg and teaches them at home again. Her involvement at West Whitesburg and short tenure as a Letcher County school board member has left her discouraged about education reform. She is especially angry with Letcher County Superintendent Jack Burkich and the school board. "I got real tired of him (Burkich) and others under him saying they are doing things for kids. They don't do things for kids."

Kentucky's education reform act was designed to revolutionize the state's public schools. In June 1989, the state Supreme Court issued a decision which found the state's public schools to be unequal. Children in poor districts did not receive the same quality of education as children in wealthier districts. The court ordered the legislature to devise an equitable plan.

The legislature's plan addressed every aspect of education: funding, teaching methods, and governance. The plan also included rules that were meant to eliminate patronage, nepotism and politics within school districts. The legislature increased taxes by $1.8 billion to improve schools.

The nationally publicized reforms jolted educators and parents throughout the state. Administrators had to adjust to new responsibilities. Teachers had to struggle with new teaching methods. Parents worried that their children wouldn't get a good education.

In 1991, during the first year of reform, West Whitesburg Elementary got as much publicity as any school.

West Whitesburg is in Letcher County, in the state's southeastern coal fields. It is the county's largest elementary school with 542 students and 42 teachers.

Coal is the dominant industry in Whitesburg, but the school system employs the most people. Whoever

Breach

controls school jobs and the budget wields considerable power within the county.

West Whitesburg's trouble began in May 1991, when the school council decided to ask the Letcher County school board for control of the school's budget.

Under reform, individual schools can determine how to spend money for instructional materials. But county school administrators said they were not able to break down the district's budget into individual schools. The board had adopted a policy which said that councils had to wait two years before they could ask to manage their school budget.

West Whitesburg's council challenged that policy. The council asked to be listed on the agenda at the board's monthly meeting. Superintendent Burkich didn't list them. In June, they again asked to be on the agenda. Again, the council wasn't listed. Meanwhile, the Letcher County school board cut the pay of West Whitesburg's principal.

At the June board meeting, West Whitesburg council members questioned board members about their decision to put a mobile special education unit at West Whitesburg. The questions led to a heated exchange between council members and the superintendent.

In an interview after the meeting, Regina Sizemore and Freddy Oakes, the other West Whitesburg parent representative, talked about their frustrations with the board. "Our council consists of some very informed people," Sizemore said. "We're willing to be on the cutting edge. We're willing to make mistakes."

Oakes was clear about what he wanted. "I grew up in Floyd County, at Wheelright. I thought of Wheelright as being a fairly good school at the time I grew up there. Then, when I went to U.K., I said, 'What did I miss?'

"I'd like for my kids, when they go on to school, they will have experienced these things here in this school system and be equal to the kids in Lexington, Boston, New York, wherever."

A day after the June meeting, Superintendent Burkich called Charlene Collins, the West Whitesburg principal, into his office.

"I was told directly to go back and sit down with my council and tell them that they were not to speak up publicly," she said during an interview that summer. "I was supposed to make phone calls (to Burkich) on issues that the council was going to decide, so that when we got in a council meeting or we got in a board meeting, that we did not give the public a negative image of us. That all decisions should be made and all negative conversations should take place out of the public eye. And I, as principal, had the responsibility to bring to that council what the board of education wanted done at that school. . . .That I would carry forth the edict of the administration to the council. The council would not speak up in public meetings, and for us just to turn tail and run. And I couldn't agree with that."

Collins resigned the following week.

Ironically, during an interview on the same day that he met with Collins, Burkich talked about how important he thought parental involvement was to school reform. "One of the most positive aspects of 940 (the education reform bill) is that parents have an opportunity to get into the school. You show me a school parents come in and out of freely, and you'll see a good school. . . . The key to the whole education process is parental involvement."

The dispute caught the attention of state Education Commissioner Thomas Boysen and the state school board. In July 1991, Boysen traveled to Whitesburg to meet with the West Whitesburg school council, Superintendent Burkich and the Letcher County board of education. He listened to complaints and then laid out a challenge to the district, whose students generally score lower than most other students in the state.

Boysen said that he wanted Letcher County "to be, within one year, a lighthouse district in school-based decision-making for Kentucky, and especially for eastern Kentucky. . . ."

In September 1991, the state school board heard an update on the Letcher County dispute. Education Commissioner Boysen spoke of his own observations. "When I first went down to Letcher County, I was thinking, 'Well, we'll wrap this up, and then we will go on and work at some other place.' But actually, I think what we have here is a pioneering situation, with a very active and sincere and able school council, which is going to be turning up new issues."

Meanwhile, the West Whitesburg school council was trying to hire a new principal. Under reform, the principal is the school's educational leader and chief administrator.

The council interviewed several candidates and offered the job to one person. But the salary, which the Letcher County board had reduced that summer, was too low. As a temporary measure, the council asked a retired Letcher County principal to take over the post until a permanent replacement was found.

The school council accomplished several things that first year. Parents and teachers volunteered for committees to work on the budget, curriculum, and building use. They decided how to spend money for instructional programs. They made sure teachers got training. They installed juice machines in the school to give students an alternative to buying soft drinks.

The council was also an advocate for other schools in the district. When West Whitesburg asked the school board for money to buy special math kits, it requested that other schools get the kits too.

In March 1992, Regina Sizemore and Freddy Oakes lost re-election bids for the school council. By any measure, the vote had the feel of a typical eastern Kentucky election, where faction politics rule. In the weeks before the election, 43 parents joined the Parent Teacher Student Association so that they would be eligible to vote for council members. Most of the new members had not attended PTSA or school council meetings during the past year. According to one long-time PTSA member, many of the new voters were bus drivers and their husbands and families.

Pam Anderson, a teacher's aide at West Whitesburg, and Nancy Kaye Blair, a new PTSA member, won the election.

The election of Anderson to the board appeared to violate state law. State Education Commissioner Boysen sent memos to Superintendent Burkich saying Anderson was ineligible to serve as a parent representative on the council if she worked at the school. Burkich ignored the memos. Anderson transferred to another school, and the election results stood.

After the election uproar, one state newspaper declared that school reform was dead in Letcher County.

A year has passed since Regina Sizemore and Freddy Oakes lost the school council election. During that time, state Education Commissioner Boysen appointed Sizemore to the Letcher County school board, after one member was forced to resign because he had illegally sold coal to the school district.

While on the board, Sizemore questioned how school money was spent. She balked when the board wanted to pass its $22 million budget after a 45-minute discussion. "I wouldn't rubber-stamp things," she said.

Sizemore ran for a full term on the board in November, but was defeated. "That told me that the general public didn't want a change." In January, she pulled her two boys out of West Whitesburg. She plans to teach them at home until they are high school age. Then, she says, she might send them to a private school.

At West Whitesburg, teachers are adapting to mandated reforms. They have set up a non-graded primary program for students in kindergarten through third grade. They are learning to teach in new ways, relying on educational activities instead of textbooks and work sheets. Students sit at tables rather than individual desks, and work in teams.

During a lunch break, teachers talked about their experiences with school reform. "The worst part was, this wasn't how I was taught to teach," says Mary Slemp, who teaches lower primary. "It was like sending us off to a basketball game without a ball."

Betty Caudill, an upper primary teacher, is enthusiastic. "I love being able to teach. We were regimented before. My day flows now. The children like it. My younger ones are doing better work. The older ones are pulling the other ones up."

Pauline Adams teaches kindergarten and first grade. "I hated it at first. I like it better now. . . . I have seen learning take place."

During the 1991-92 school year, students throughout Kentucky in grades four, eight and twelve took comprehensive tests. The scores were released early this year. Of the 10 grade schools in Letcher County, West Whitesburg ranked second highest with a score of 32. In comparison, the highest score in the state went to Anchorage, in Louisville, with a total of 56. The school with the lowest score was in Letcher County. Kingdom Come scored 20.3.

Under reform, schools have to reach levels set by the state. If they do not, the state will offer technical assistance. If schools continue to fail, the state can place teachers on probation, remove the superintendent and school board, and appoint replacements.

Despite the county's low scores, Superintendent Burkich says he is confident that Letcher County schools will improve. "By next year, we will more than exceed the goal," he says. "There is so much evidence that what we are doing is going to pay dividends."

Back at West Whitesburg, the council has accomplished very little this year. Libby Honeycutt, the mother of two children at West Whitesburg, used to go to council meetings. She doesn't anymore. "Now there's just a lot of nit-picking and arguing," she says. "It's hard to take and stay sane."

The problem, it seems, is that the council's bylaws say that decisions should be reached by consensus, with all members in agreement. If one member disagrees, then no decision can be made. This policy has deadlocked the council because in nearly every case, one parent member has not voted with the majority.

To remedy the situation, the council proposed an amendment to the bylaws. If the council couldn't agree on a decision after discussing it for two meetings, then the majority would rule. The problem is everyone agreed to the change, except the one parent member. Therefore, the change couldn't be adopted.

New council elections are scheduled this spring.

Nancy Adams, a freelance journalist, lives in Lincoln County, W. Va. Her interview with Grady Stumbo appeared in the spring 1989 issue of ***Now and Then****.*

Jesse Stuart's vision for the schools in Eastern Kentucky, from his memoir of teaching, *The Thread That Runs So True*, 1949: " first, good roads until we could have consolidation of schools, then, consolidated schools, well-qualified teachers, who would teach pupils how to get along with one another. Teach them elementary principles of health. Help them find a vocation in life and work toward that vocation. Not let the talent of any pupil born upon this earth with a fair amount of intelligence, be lost to the whole of humanity. Teach them to protect, and where possible rebuild natural resources that had been selfishly destroyed by lust for the dirty dollar. Teach them to think about good, honest government *of the people, by the people, and for the people*. Teach them, thousands and thousands of them with good minds and character, to be teachers. Pay them a living wage and not the death-colored wages they now received. Teach those who went into other professions to give support to the school system in their communities. And, above all, teach them this: Whatever talent you have as a schoolteacher, governor, or shoe repairman, do your job well and honestly and with fairness to all people. And, teach him who didn't have any talent at all that he could at least be a good citizen. He could be an asset to human society instead of a liability."

Of Mr. Ward & Mrs. Dixon & Miss Belle & Chief

The influence of teachers & other thoughts on education by some people of Appalachia

Now and Then **asked some people around the region:**

- **Which teacher most influenced you?**
- **What was lacking in your education?**
- **What was the best aspect?**

Here are some of the replies:

Gary Carden

Storyteller and lecturer in Sylva, N.C.

Which teacher most influenced you?
Her name was Nima, and she was my teacher in the third and fourth grade. It was during World War II, and Nima's fiance had been drafted. Our school building had been condemned, and our classes were in the First Baptist Church. Nima would sit behind her desk, red-eyed and weepy and write long letters to Woody, who was somewhere in Germany. When she wasn't writing, she was reading Woody's letters. Sometimes she read them to us. Since my father was dead, and my mother had left me on the porch of my grandfather's house and caught the bus to Knoxville, Nima was partial to me. I got to sit in her lap when she read to us. Sometimes, she read Walter Farley horse stories to us. Sometimes I went home with her and sat with her mother who spoke with a German accent and gave me cookies. There was also a retarded sister who had grey hair and dressed like a child, and said, "Little boy, let's play." I loved Nima.

What was lacking in your education?
The arts. The school told me nothing about music, dance and painting, and very little about literature. I do remember being required to memorize "In Flanders Field," and my whole class recited it (shouted it) on Sidney Lanier Day. I never saw a dramatic presentation until the Playmakers from Chapel Hill came to the school with "Lost Horizon." When I went backstage, an actor showed me how they made the airplane fly away at the end. He stuck a piece of cardboard in an electric fan.
AAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRWWWWWWWWW.
Wonderful. Outside of that I had to depend on Saturday matinees, comic books, radio shows and Edgar Rice Burroughs for "art."

What was the best aspect of your education?
Knowing the name of every student in my school. Walking home with Charlie K. who had an overly active imagination and liked to sneak in the condemned Sylvan Theatre where we invariably saw sinister shapes lurking behind the curtains.

We were like a family. I never felt ill-at-ease until high school and college. Frankly, I don't remember learning anything out of a book, but, of course, I did. Learning was effortless. No stress, no competition. We sat in a pine thicket at recess and talked. Charlie K. told us astonishing things. His family wasn't really his family at all, he said. His real father and mother were famous explorers who were killed in Africa by German spies. He told us how he would avenge their murders when he was an adult. We played Monopoly, went to movies together and ate supper at each other's homes. I don't think that type of closeness exists today.

Kevin B. McKinney

Mayor of Jonesborough, Tenn.

Which teacher most influenced you?
In the 11th grade, I had a history teacher named Robert Markland. He really pushed me to study and to excel. I have always loved history and political science. That class led me to take about 18 hours of university history and political science courses. Now he is teaching my ninth-grade daughter.

What was lacking in your education?
I did not try very hard in math and science. I was not motivated, and it hurt me on the university level. Obviously, I should have worked harder in those areas. We had very little black history in school, but my parents gave me and my brother a lot of information, and we were fortunate to travel a lot.

What was the best aspect of your education?
I got along well with everyone: Teachers, students. I never had this attitude that everyone was against me. I guess my training at home, from a school administrator and a nurse, gave me an understanding that I was somebody, so I had a lot of self respect, self worth. Those ideas have been the cornerstone of whatever success God has bestowed upon me.

Garry Barker

Writer and assistant director of student crafts program at Berea College, Berea, Ky.

Which teacher most influenced you?
I dedicated my first book, in 1983, to "Miss Belle, Eliza Belle Cook, the teacher who loved a bashful backward mountain boy enough to open his eyes to the joy of art and literature. She believed in me, and I still love her."

"Miss Belle" was my third, sixth and eighth grade teacher at the Hillsboro (Ky.) Elementary School, and she was the first person to suggest that maybe a youngster from a sharecropper family of nine kids really *could* aspire to more than a minimum-wage future, that it was okay for a Bald Hill boy to be fascinated with reading about the Knights of the Round Table and also to love dearly the works of nearby Jesse Stuart.

Miss Belle taught *me* to believe in me.

What was lacking in your education?
At no level of my formal education—including four years at Berea College—was there an opportunity to study *my* culture. There were no courses then in Appalachian history, literature, geography, economics, or anything else that would acknowledge my heritage as worthwhile. Leaving us out helped reinforce the perception that Appalachia is inferior.

What was the best aspect of your education?
The best aspect of my formal education, at every level, was the perhaps contradictory approach which emphasized the old-fashioned basics—grammar, math, history, etc.—yet somehow fostered creative expression. I had enough good teachers who were willing to help me dig, to apply enough discipline to keep from losing track, that I left school with the ability to study on my own.

My education taught me how to educate myself.

Fred Chappell

Author, poet, professor of English at University of North Carolina-Greensboro.

Which teacher most influenced you?
It would be impossible to say truthfully which of my teachers, formal or informal or even accidental, *most* influenced me. And I suspect the same is true for others. I'm lucky in having been able to enjoy the company of farmers, fishermen, civil rights workers, musicians and doctors. In the same way exactly I've enjoyed the company of artists, scholars, writers, poets and scientists.

I'm grateful for each and every.

What was lacking in your education?
Somehow I never caught on to mathematics. I'm not the brightest person in the world, but I'm not entirely stupid. I don't see why I couldn't have achieved a better comprehension of the operation of numbers.

What was the best aspect of your education?
The were (are) two:

The personal friendships of teachers; and library stacks.

William H. Turner

Chair of the sociology department, Winston-Salem State University, North Carolina, co-author (with Ed Cabbell) of Blacks in Appalachia.

Which teacher most influenced you?
"Chief" taught me at "The School"—the Lynch Colored School—in Harlan County, Ky. Chief—Charles Montague Cross—was the janitor from 1926-1964 at The School. Between the sixth and 11th grade, my after-school job was to assist Chief. I learned as much from this wise old gentleman as I did in the classrooms.

The School was a red brick building, a

What were the best aspects of your education? There were two: the personal friendships of teachers; and library stacks.

Fred Chappell

The inadverently taught lesson of the graded readers was that we were all imperfect versions of other people.
Jim Wayne Miller

first-rate primary through senior year academy that had been provided, like everything else, by the town's owner/patron, the United States Steel Company of Pittsburgh. The Company built a larger, cut-stone facility, simply called Lynch School, two miles away for the children of white coal miners. Lynch Colored School, along with dozens of other colored schools that dotted the hollows of Appalachian coal towns, was renowned for its modern facility, its winning athletic teams and for producing excellent students—even though the books and furnishings were often hand-downs from Lynch School. The faculty of The School had taken degrees from Fisk, Hampton, Tuskegee and Wilberforce universities, among others. Through the years, many of The School's graduates studied at those same colleges and achieved stations in life far beyond what some might expect of black people from Harlan County.

In 1958, when he was 59 and I was 12, Chief handed me a crisp $1 bill, telling me that "you can always say that a colored man gave you your first money-earning job." I had known Chief all of my life because he and his wife, Miss Annie Belle, and my maternal grandparents—Miss Ran and Shootdaddy (a.ka. Minnie Lee and E.J. Randolph)—were close friends, separated only by a 10-foot yard between their company-owned houses. They shared in the raising of my mother ("Punkin") and her two sisters, who, with the Cross boys, "Junebug" (Charles Montague Jr.), Bill and Tom, attended The School. Chief and Shootdaddy were drinking buddies who also enhanced their inadequate wages as co-managers of the varied and sundry (variously sordid?) human services of running Granny's boarding house. A 22-year-old miner transplanted from Matewan, W.Va., in 1939 was steered by Chief to live in Granny's boarding house. He took Punkin in marriage a year later (she was 15). Chief hosted the nuptial celebration and was godfather to their 10 children including myself.

Chief's life had been no crystal stairway, but he was trusted by others. He was an elder and a diplomat. The authority and opinions of teachers were respected almost unquestioningly, but Chief held an equal standing among them (and the preachers). He connected the sometimes fragile relations between the educated sector of the community and the common colored working folk, most of whom, like he, had little or no formal education.

Chief knew everybody and their business. He was a master storyteller, taking his topics from folktales, gossip, rumor and truth about the region's ruffians and upright citizens, both colored and white. He never affirmed idle talk or tattle. He simply taught me and countless others the ins and outs of life in the mountains. Without putting anyone down, he put everybody on equal moral grounds. Chief knew "the real deal," especially on those matters pertaining to the peculiar status of colored people. It was he who taught that while others might appear better off, they were not better *than*. They too had their trash, and, after all, he was the janitor and all-seeing/all-knowing garbage man.

He was positive about the human condition and did not dwell on the underside of life, though he knew it well. His stories took me on the adventures between 1880 and 1930 that had transported my people from the fields of the Upland South and the mines and steel mills of Birmingham and Bessemer. We shined shoes ("hustlin' 'n' make-do") in Chattanooga in 1908, pulled coke from the hot and dangerous ovens of Big Stone Gap, Va., and came over Black Mountain to bloody Harlan in 1926. The saga of the Scottsboro Boys was not just something he read about. There were no books on this stuff.

The famous colored people like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Ida Wells Barnett, Frederick Douglass and George Washington Carver, whose photos peered down from the hallways, spoke to me—through Chief. Often, while cleaning The School, Chief would tell me about "how rough as a cob it was to be without (an education)."

I became one Chief chose to push to achieve, as his sons Bill and Tom had been forced to quit school (both at 17, leaving home to work in a foundry in Cleveland). They left just after Chief had almost ice-picked to death a white vegetable truck vendor who slapped him in front of his wife and children in 1940. Everybody, even the white school superintendent, arrived at the Company-run jail to insist on Chief's release. Seems that the merchant rascal had whacked a pillar in the community, a man who represented the salt of the earth. Chief never spoke of the incident.

They closed The School after my junior year. I was in this brave new world. Chief, even as he had pushed me to work for advancement of colored people, hated school integration. On my last working day in 1963, he divulged his view that "this integration is gonna be worse on Negroes than moonshine and home-brew,

you just watch." In many ways, I know now that he was at least partly right. Most of our excellent colored teachers were not hired under the consolidated system. Chief, too, was devastated. They didn't need two janitors.

The college-going rate of black kids declined precipitously. They had no Chief. Only white heroes (former Company and Lynch School officials) peered eerily down from the framed portraits at this strange place the older colored people called "The White School." Chief's stalwart sons, both now retired from the International Harvester Foundry in Chicago, came and got "The Old Man," now a widower, in 1965. In spite of his long tenure at The School (where his highest salary was $160 per month), no Social Security payments were ever deducted, and he had no provision for health care. But Bill and Tom took good care of him. He died shortly after going to Chicago. They brought his remains home. I came to the funeral from Notre Dame where I was in graduate school, after having worked my way through the University of Kentucky as a part-time janitor. I turned 21 that year.

Granny Ran is still in Lynch, nearing 100 this year. She still tends a collard patch that she and Miss Annie Belle worked. The Cross Boys come home each Memorial Day, and we tend the gravesites of their family and my father, who put 45 years in Black Mountain's coal pits. Momma Punk—now 70—feeds us and plays "Amazing Grace." We laugh and cry about The Old Man. I quietly excuse myself and take my boys over to the ghost of the Lynch Colored School building and look for signs of Chief. I owe him something, and I have a whole new set of questions.

What was most lacking in your education?
A broader and more *comparative* frame of reference to events *outside* my immediate environs, especially the civil rights movement. And, structured counseling on college opportunities was virtually *nonexistent*.

What was the best aspect of your education?
The unity between school, family and community. Indeed—surely as an aspect of segregation—the *entire* "colored" community of my hometown was inextricably tied to the school, which, next to the church, was the center of black community life.

Jim Wayne Miller

Poet, writer and professor of German at Western Kentucky University.

Which teacher most influenced you?
Miss Duckett, my third grade teacher in Leicester, N.C. Miss Duckett, who must have been in her early 20s and just out of teachers college, made me a teaching assistant. She held silent reading periods, and she designated me and two of my classmates as helpers during these sessions. We were assigned two rows each, and we stood at the front of our rows waiting until a classmate came on an unfamiliar word or phrase and raised a hand. Our job was to go to their desks, pronounce the unfamiliar word in a whisper, or explain its meaning in a hushed voice. During these sessions Miss Duckett usually worked at her desk, filling out report cards or maintaining other records. Sometimes she used a typewriter at her desk. The typewriter fascinated me. (Miss Duckett fascinated me, too. I was in love with her and intended to marry her when I grew up.) She noticed my interest in the typewriter and introduced me to it, rolling in a clean sheet of paper and helping me type my name.

What was lacking in your education?
I don't think that teachers and administrators had particularly high aspirations for their students. We were not intellectually challeged beyond fifth or sixth grade. Ours was a country school, and it was assumed, I think, that we would, at best, graduate from high school and continue to live in the community and become farmers and factory workers. The possibility of attending college was emphasized by family members, not by the school's teachers or administrators.

I noticed early on that the life that I was familiar with had little to do with life reflected in school texts, which were of the Dick and Jane variety. In the watercolor world of the graded readers, fathers had dark wavy hair and wore suits. Mothers were pretty and blond (and bland); they smiled and baked cookies. The boys flew kites. The girls rolled hoops along sidewalks. The fathers I knew wore denim—overalls or jeans—and work shirts. The mothers wore resin-colored combs in their hair. We didn't live in houses on corner lots, but off gravel roads, far up fast-running creeks. The postman did not walk house to house; he came in a car or truck, often to a row of mailboxes at a turning place where the road ended.

The inadvertently taught lesson of the graded readers was that we were all imperfect versions of other people. The underlying assumption was that what was far away was more interesting and valid than what was near. (I should stress that in this shortcoming my school was typical.)

In my critique of Appalachian education, I have advocated changes in teacher training. Teachers need to know something of the history and culture of the place where they teach and (collectively) the people they work among.

Some people attempt to counter this argument by saying that most teachers in Appalachia are from the region and thus are already familiar with the history and culture of their region. But the familiar is not necessarily the known. In fact, what is

> *Each of us looked forward to the day when we would enter Mrs. Dixon's room. And each of us dreaded the moment when we might be assigned to Mrs.Tanner.*
>
> *Wilma Dykeman*

familiar to us is apt to exist as a blind spot in our perspective. We are all Americans, but we still study American history. We speak English, but we still study how to speak and write more effectively. By the same logic, we should study the history and culture of our various regions and try to understand how our various regional experiences relate to the larger national experience and identity. We should examine our own culture with the same rigor we bring to examining one that is far away and different from ours.

What was the best aspect of your education?

That is suggested, I think, in what I've told about Miss Duckett: she was quick to notice what a student was interested in and tried to encourage that interest. She let stronger students help other students. She interrupted the regular classroom routine to permit students to engage in an activity in which they showed interest or ability. She pushed the student gently into new areas and assumed the student could succeed.

Bob Henry Baber

Coordinator of Bonner Scholars Program at Concord College, Athens, W.Va., and a poet.

Which teacher most influenced you?
My father, Troy Nash Baber, was my most influential teacher. He taught me to appreciate my mountain heritage—even though I grew up in New York. Equally important, he shared his creativity as a visual artist which led directly to my interest in becoming a poet and writer.

What was lacking in your education?
What was most lacking was a holistic view of the world that was inclusive of global cultures and religions.

What was the best aspect of your education?
Interestingly, being exposed to religion (I went to Lutheran schools) has proven to be a great benefit in terms of being an Appalachian writer. The reverend Robert Gutheil put *A Catcher in the Rye* in my hands in ninth grade, and the world turned on its axis for me. (He was almost fired over teaching this blasphemy in religion class.)

Tom Howze

Retired teacher, Jonesborough, Tenn.

Which teacher most influenced you?
Miss Lucy Gage, at Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, when I was doing my master's, influenced me more than anybody else. She was a humanistic teacher and espoused the cause of progressive education. This was back in 1936-37. She was in charge of the elementary education department, training teachers to go out and teach by the Dewey Method, which was the experience method. Dewey was one of the leading professors at Columbia University and had written a book on experience and education. Miss Gage made me see that there was more to teaching than just a textbook, and that anything people experienced they remembered much longer.

She recommended me to the TVA School in Sheffield, Ala., which had people come from all over the world to see them teach the progressive method. The method is one in which you let children participate and experience things. You led them into it, but they did a lot of things themselves. For example, we had a glass beehive in the window of the classroom and we could watch the bees as they made honey. And we studied Maeterlinck's classic of "The Bee"—a beautiful story—and the children got a lot out of that.

What was lacking in your education?
I grew up in Erwin and went to school there. We were out in the county, but my parents paid for me to go to the city schools. They paid tuition for six children because the city schools went for nine months and the county schools went for seven months. Most of the city school teachers had degrees; many of the county schoolteachers did not. We had very little art or music or the things that would mean so much to you later in life. I didn't get started painting until I was about 77 years old, and I'm 81 now. I think the schools then were not as conscious of the need for things that would help you later in life and would mean so much to you.

An interview with Tom Howze is on page 31.

Wilma Dykeman

*Author of the **The Tall Woman** and other novels and nonfiction works (some with husband James Stokely), many of which encompass the Appalachian region. She shared this excerpt from her book, **Explorations:***

Do you believe parents are kind to children when they make life as easy as possible? ("I don't want my children to grow

up the way I did. I want them to have it 'better.' ")

Do you believe friends are good to us when they make no demands? ("I want them to like me.")

Do you believe employers are thoughtful when they maintain no special standards, require no effort at improvement? ("It's too much trouble to get anybody to do his best.")

My own answer to those questions is in the memory I have of two teachers. I call them Miss Tanner and Mrs. Dixon, because those are not their real names. Everything else about this little fable is true, however.

Each of the 15 or so students in my grammar school class looked forward to the day when we would enter Mrs. Dixon's room. And each of us dreaded the moment when we might be assigned to Miss Tanner's grade.

Mrs. Dixon was a short, plump lady who wore pastel colors—the blues matched her pretty round eyes, the pinks accented her clear, fine skin. Her hair was always beautifully arranged, and she spoke with soft, endearing tones. Studies under her were supposed to be pleasant and easy, and she was not stingy with high grades on themes and exams.

Miss Tanner was somewhat different. She was not very tall but seemed taller because of her angular figure. Straight brown hair often hung limply beside her weathered face, and the grays and browns she favored in her clothes did nothing to improve her attractiveness. She smelled of cold cream and camphor.

But we would have overlooked the difference between blue dresses and brown, we would have overlooked the cold cream and the firm voice, if it hadn't been for the high standards of performance set by Miss Tanner. Why, she had been known to "keep in" a student who hadn't learned to spell or multiply correctly—until he learned the problem or the word! And she made everyone earn the grade he or she received.

I went through both their classes. And I loved Mrs. Dixon. She was so easy to love: complimentary, cheerful, charming. At the end of the year I took her a present—box of rose-scented dusting powder—and I almost cried because I was leaving her room.

When I finished Miss Tanner's class I took her no gifts. I had liked her well enough, but there was a feeling of release in leaving her keen eye, sharp ear, questioning tongue. I had worked harder than I had ever worked in any previous class of my school years.

And yet . . .

As I entered high school, I began to find gaps in my knowledge, many of which should have been covered during my studies with Mrs. Dixon. And I began to use the facts and habits I had acquired under Miss Tanner. When I went on to college, I still encountered deficiencies and proficiencies which I could trace back to these two teachers.

My memory of Mrs. Dixon and of Miss Tanner has enlarged my understanding of what each of these women represented.

Their legacy to me is knowledge of the fact that easiest is not always best.

I wish I could give Miss Tanner a box of dusting powder.

—from *Explorations* published by Wakestone Books, 1984. Used by permission.

Robert Morgan

Author of several volumes of poetry and two short story collections and professor of English at Cornell University, originally from Western North Carolina.

On the second day of my first year at Tuxedo School in Henderson County, N.C., I was suddenly overwhelmed with homesickness. The first day had lasted only half a day, and I had gotten through that. But the second day I thought of the yard at home and my sand pile and my mother in the house, and all at once the prospect of sitting at the desk all day made school seem an unbearable desolation. I must have cried up a storm, for the teacher called my sister down from the fifth grade to comfort me. When that failed, I was led to the principal's room. A silver-haired man with gleaming glasses lifted me onto his lap and said, "Now listen here, you can't go home. We couldn't run this school without you, no sir." When I stopped crying, he let me play with the gold key on his watch chain, and in a few minutes I was laughing at his jokes and faces.

That was my introduction to Mr. Ward, who was principal at Tuxedo School for 27 years. Though I later learned how rigorous and demanding a teacher he could be, I knew from the first his kindness and concern for the children in his care.

I did not have a class with Mr. Ward until the sixth grade, but by then I was long familiar with him as the principal who spoke to us at assembly and on the intercom, who lectured to us on the rules of the school, who showed filmstrips on rainy days, who awarded prizes at Hal-

I thought of the yard at home and my sand pile and my mother in the house, and all at once the prospect of sitting at the desk all day made school an unbearable desolation.
Robert Morgan

Shortly after she died, one of her fellow nuns awoke to find the good dead sister standing in the doorway of her bedroom.
Janet Hearne

loween and at the end of the school year, who meted out punishment in his office and who often played the piano at assembly in a stirring, rollicking manner. When he told stories, he made exaggerated gestures and leapt around the stage to keep us laughing. When he talked about morals and ideals, he became virtually a preacher.

Mr. Ward took the study of grammar and correct speech as a moral imperative, and his zeal was contagious. For years I have taught Ivy League students who have attended fine prep schools and who know less grammar than Mr. Ward's sixth grade class.

I wish I could say I was a good student in that class. But the fact is I was lazy. I often failed to do homework or correct my spelling mistakes even after they were pointed out. I was a daydreamer; Mr. Ward sometimes caught me staring out the window. I had taken to reading books about the Klondike and the Far North and often took up class time racing through the novels of Jack London and James Oliver Curwood. Mr. Ward would walk around the class and lift a book from my hands without pausing in his lesson. For a man who could sometimes be impatient, he showed an amazing patience with me.

It was Mr. Ward who had me write my first story. The rest of the class had gone for the day to Biltmore House, and I either could not afford it or chose not to go, and stayed alone in the classroom. Mr. Ward, knowing my interests, said, "Why don't you write a story about a man lost in the Canadian Rockies. Show how he survives and returns to civilization." All day I labored at the composition, feeling for the first time the thrill of trying to make a place real and a story unfold in just the right words. By the end of the day I had about 10 pages to show him.

Mr. Ward was himself a wonderful storyteller, both in and out of the classroom. He kept us spellbound with episodes from world history, from *The Odyssey*, from Greek myths. One afternoon he told us the whole of the novel *Silas Marner*, and I have ever since felt great affection for the work of George Eliot.

Mr. Ward made us feel that we rural mountain children could, through hard work, succeed as well as anybody. What he really taught through grammar was aspiration, ambition, confidence. Through his stories about working his way through Furman and the University of North Carolina, he gave us the sense that we could go to college also. He liked to say, "Mountain people are smart as anybody if they give *themselves* the chance." Though he left the mountains several times as a young man to go to school and to teach in other places, he always returned here.

When I visited Mr. Ward in a nursing home during his last years, he would often ask me to help him remember a particular word. He was still trying to find the exact name, the perfect expression for what he had in mind. He was still in love with the art of language and delighted in finding a word he had been searching for. Dean A. Ward died August 30, 1991, at the age of 87 after a long illness.

Often I find myself in front of students telling his stories, passing on his ideas. He changed the lives of several generations of children, and his presence will be felt in implicit and indirect ways for generations to come. Hundreds of us are better people because we knew him.

A version of this story appeared in the Hendersonville ***Times-News****.*

> "The path to the school door is one that few care to tread . . . most of the children hereabout run free as the fawns and cubs that they often capture for playmates—as timid, as lithe and about as intellectual."
> — Emma Bell Miles
> *Spirit of the Mountains* 1905

Janet Hearne

A writer originally from Knoxville, now living in Jonesborough, Tenn., whose book, ***Only in California****, is forthcoming.*

I am a product of Catholic education in the 1950s, and because of that I have long considered a class action suit against the Vatican for twisting my psyche to suit its needs. The horror stories have stayed with me. Because it was through stories that the nuns and priests frightened us into submission.

There was the story of the girl who got pregnant while swimming in a swimming pool. (I will spare you the details, but this conception did not involve divine intervention or a sexual partner. You must use your imagination.) There was the story of the ideal nun who from the outside was pious and good but inside seethed with resentment and black thoughts. Shortly after she died, one of her fellow nuns awoke to find the good dead sister standing in the doorway of her bedroom. They stared at each other; no words were spo-

ken. Next morning's daylight revealed two handprints burned into the wood of the door frame where the good dead sister had rested her hands. Her black heart had sent her to hell and ours would, too, if we were not pure in thought, word, and deed.

True, those stories scared the fool out of me, but the story that made the truest impression was told to us by the monsignor one Christmas season in Knoxville. We were in third grade, anxious for the holidays, thrilled with the news that the monsignor, yes, the monsignor, was coming to visit our class.

He stood before us regal in his black cassock. His voice, roughened by whiskey and cigarettes, held us rapt and breathless in our seats. The monsignor told us the story of Saint John Bosco, a poor Italian who entered the priesthood in the mid-1800s. When it came time for the feast of the Virgin Mary, the priests of John Bosco's church laid gifts before the statue of the Virgin. There was incense and fine woven cloth and caskets of gold. John Bosco had nothing to offer. He was too poor. This saddened him because he wanted to honor the mother of God. Then John Bosco realized he had a gift he could offer. He went back to his room and returned with a rag. Inside the rag were four wooden balls. John Bosco walked to the front of the church and he began juggling. It was a skill he had learned as a child. The priests gathered there were horrified. This was blasphemy. John Bosco must be stopped. John Bosco kept juggling until the sweat poured from his brow. A priest made a move to stop him. Just then the statue of the Virgin Mary came to life. She stepped down from her pedestal, walked up to John Bosco and with her own gown she wiped the sweat from his brow. She told the priests that John Bosco's simple gift meant more to her than fine woven cloth and incense and caskets of gold because he had given a part of himself.

I was floored by John Bosco and the Virgin Mary. My heart cracked open with joy. Here it was: rote catechism with a pulse. God loved me; His mother loved me. Each of us was precious in their sight. I could be who I was — a skinny, snaggle-toothed eight-year-old who liked lime Lik-m-Aid — and still get to heaven. The story of John Bosco was my first epiphany.

The monsignor, ready to take his leave, blessed us in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. After he left, Sister stared at us for one hard minute trying to gauge if we had shown proper reverence for the monsignor. Then Sister said, "Class, lunch time. Line up, single file, arm's length apart, no talking." And so we trooped, rigid soldiers of Christ, indistinguishable in our uniforms, to the cafeteria where we shared our meal in silence.

Marilou Awiakta

A poet and author who grew up in Oak Ridge, Tenn., and has written extensively of her Cherokee/Appalachian heritage.

Which teacher most influenced you?
The three years I lived in France (1964-67) mark the watershed of my life and work. Margaret Zimmerman, my French teacher at Oak Ridge High School (Tenn.) is responsible for my going there. She gave me the vision of what it would be like to move into another culture through its language. And she insisted on excellence In France I learned who I was. I also learned that the *way* a people think is inherent in their language. At the University of Tennessee, Mr. Charles Webb and Dr. Bain Stewart were my advisors. Their belief in me and my work sustains me now, 30 years later.

What was lacking in your education?
Half of humanity. In the 1950s, there were no Women's Studies, no Appalachian Studies, and beyond the Trail of Tears, no studies of the Cherokee. In short, I couldn't find myself in what I studied — so I had to "do for myself or do without" — a fine Appalachian tradition. I did it — but with great difficulty. How fortunate students are today to have diversity in their studies. They'll be able to get on much faster than I did.

What was the best aspect of your education?
The best aspect was excellence in my teachers. Most of them were dedicated not only to giving the knowledge of their subject, but also of themselves. They had heart. From childhood I was educated to live in a culturally diverse society. Of the 75,000 people in Oak Ridge, about a third were native East Tennesseans. Oak Ridge was the atomic frontier. I like frontiers — physical, spiritual or intellectual — they're rugged, free-wheeling, sometimes bawdy — and always interesting. You can create your life. That's the best aspect of my formal/social education. It was in harmony with the slogan, "Mountaineers are always free."

In the 1950s, there were no Women's Studies, no Appalachian Studies, and beyond the Trail of Tears, no studies of the Cherokee.
Marilou Awiakta

Renewing A Sense Of Place

by Randy W. Oakes

After over six years in Phoenix I returned to my hometown in North Carolina. I was busy unpacking Mayflower boxes when a friend who had helped me move returned from her first foray to the mall. She was frustrated.

"What's wrong?" I said. I was concerned, for she had worked diligently. I wanted her introduction to the South to be pleasant.

"I lost count of Baptist churches and filling stations," she said. "Doesn't anyone give directions with a compass? Is a convenience mart with gas pumps considered a filling station?"

I didn't know. But I did know that she had not found Four Seasons Mall and was experiencing the same frustration I knew when I first moved to the Southwest, the true melting pot of the retirement nation.

Later that afternoon, as I drove Beth to the mall, I realized I could name fewer than half the streets we traveled. My route was intuitive. My youth in Greensboro had been intuitive. Street names meant little. North, south, east, and west meant nothing. I was experiencing a renewal of my sense of place.

I remembered the first time I visited the largest hospital in Phoenix. A friend was recovering from a minor injury, a result of middle-aged muscles straining for youthful conquests. A nurse told me to walk to the next nurses' station and turn east. I stood for a full minute considering my stupidity. Should I walk outside the hospital and look at the sun to determine my position? No. It was late evening, and the sun was down. Why couldn't she have said to go two corridors and turn right? I was far from a western pioneer. Left was left, and right was right.

I was to meet a friend in the west parking lot to go to a Phoenix Suns game. Even though I visited the coliseum the day before to check the sun's position, I chose the wrong entrance. The result was that we missed part of the first period of the game. His look? How could I have been so stupid?

So Beth's anger struck me two ways. I was upset by her questioning the South. (We are a proud people.) Further, I felt vindicated. I had felt inferior to the pioneering Phoenicians, most of whom were transients and followed the sun. I had been taught from early youth to stay put and abide by the wisdom of the South.

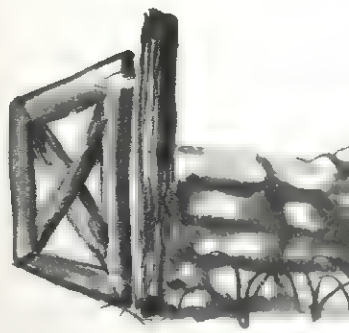
Students out West have asked me about the South. Usually they concentrated on segregation or conservative politics. I have resorted to the illustration best echoed by the fine storyteller Mary Hood. When a man crosses the street in the North, two people sitting on the porch discuss what he does. When a man crosses the street in the South, two people rocking on the porch discuss who his grandfather is.

Closer to home, I stick to a story from my junior high years. I made a 98 on a test on Dickens' *Great Expectations*. My answers had been complete and, certainly, factual. Cautiously, I approached the frail teacher. I had missed the two points on the question, "When did Pip's great expectations begin?" I had written, "In the graveyard."

"You see," my teacher said, "a young gentleman never calls a cemetery a graveyard."

I was a young gentleman through graduate school, when my Southern professors refrained from using my first name until I defended my doctoral dissertation. I remember the pride I felt as I shook hands with my committee as they, in turn, called me Randy for the first time in four years.

It was my privilege to have received a Southern gentleman's education. So why did I feel so bad when Beth questioned my heritage? When I began teaching in Phoenix, I called freshmen Mr. and Ms. They were amused. "We're only 18 years old," they said. And I renounced the South. I used their first names and welcomed the immediacy such a move might bring. Education became a relationship between friends, not a gradual initiation into adulthood. I made a mistake.



Such a mistake stemmed from a loss of a sense of place. In the South we call traffic lights "stop lights." We might conclude that the South suffers from a sense of defeat: we assume that every light will be red. After all, we lost the Civil War. I would rather deduce that we observe the law, that we feel an allegiance to authority. (Remember my delight after four years when I finally earned my first name.) We also observe signs which say "Reduce speed ahead." In Arizona, road signs suggest: "Reduced speed ahead." One consonant is the difference. But the implications are enormous. We slow when the signs tell us. In Arizona, the signs suggest, gently, that we slow our speed. Somehow, I'm not surprised that Arizonans were willing to give up federal highway funds rather than have an established freeway speed limit.

My sense of place was not seriously violated until I was in college. I was to spend a weekend with a classmate whose family lived in Mount Airy. First he told me to drive into the city and use Andy Griffith's old house as my base for the directions to follow.

"I don't know where it is," I said.

"Then go to Donna Fargo's house and we'll start there."

I knew little about country music and nothing about the birthplace of who was at that time the toast of Nashville.

Clearly frustrated, Danny tried again. "Enter Mount Airy; turn left at the swimming pool; drive to the Virginia state line, and make a U-turn. My house will be behind the first cornfield on the right."

Once I drove to Wilkes County to hike the new Stone Mountain Park. When I asked a cashier at a small store for directions, he patiently explained how to get to the park from where old man Joines' cabbage patch *used* to be.

To him, essence constituted existence. His memory delivered him where he wanted to go. I, of course, was not from around there. And, if you're not from around there, you must be from "off somewhere else."

When I returned to Greensboro after my stay in Phoenix, I was from off somewhere else. But my memory served to reacquaint me with landmarks aplenty. I still had little sense of north and south. (It's interesting that Beth's mother's car has a compass mounted above the rearview mirror.) Yet I was of the place, and the place was of me. It was not to be conquered or pioneered. It was to be draped about my shoulders, like a blanket by a fireplace.

I must return to my education and the ramifications of trying to impose my upbringing on college students in Phoenix. I tried to instill in them a sense of place. I tried to suggest that they earn their names, as I did in graduate school. When I reneged on my heritage I lost much of what I had earned. I lost a sense of institutions. I lost a sense for cabbage patches lost. I turned from the South.

Trying to explain this to Beth is useless. I'm not saying the South is better than other regions of the nation. I'm saying what the clerk in Wilkes County suggested: Essence and being are one to us. Thus, our education. Thus, our allegiance.

I was raised and educated to be a Southern gentleman. I would have it no other way. I sense direction; I need not name it. Having been raised "around here," I can only bless my fortune. Roots constitute the beginning of education. Accepting those roots after they have been tested is tantamount to knowledge, to establishing a sense of place.

Perhaps at the core of the modern educational system's problems lies the transience of our society. Children in a latchkey generation become adults with little or no transition. Certainly most teenagers selling drugs on the street didn't inherit their trade from their fathers. When rituals give way to a philosophy of making it any way you can, civilization needs an enormous compass. Dilsey, of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, needs no watch, for she can sense the hour and the minute. She, in her fidelity to tradition, has avoided the greed and pettiness of the modern Compsons in the novel. Children who traverse a different city every two or three years earn no sense of proportion and change. Theye spend most of their time lost both literally and metaphorically.

I grew up near a major freeway. We all called it The Super Highway. My parents still do. I don't know why. I did not know if it was 421, 85, 29, or some other mysterious number assigned to distance and adventure. For me, the highway meant a route to the beach; and when I began driving, I followed the same path my father's turns had etched in my memory. Then my older brother informed me that I could save 20 minutes if I took a right at the three Dempster Dumpmasters located on the outskirts of Rockingham. That was during high school. I still watch for and find those dumpsters. Their disappearance would be devastating. The desolate grass on a corner in North Carolina would be as sad as the sight of a boarded-up McDonald's. Once Greensboro revolved not around the freeway, but around K-Mart. "Just go two blocks past K-Mart and. . . ." So now we have two K-Marts. No problem. Now they're the "old K-Mart" and the "new K-Mart."

I find it impossible to separate the integrity of the individual and the dignity of place when I talk about the South. Education does not begin in school. It begins on porches during summer evenings when disembodied voices reflect once again on the Old Cone Place or the Abandoned Army Barracks. It begins with warnings against ungentlemanly behavior. Such an education is oral, but it enhances the landscape with color and fragrance.

My father has never been able to fold a map. I don't remember ever having tried. A map is a piece of paper. It is for people from off somewhere else. Given time, such people who move to the South will discard their scraps of paper and allow their sense of place, long atrophied, to perform its natural function. Each day since my return from Phoenix I have perceived a quickening of this sense. During difficult times I find myself echoing the refrain from Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel:* "O Lost. O Lost."

Randy Oakes' work has appeared in ***Real Fiction***, ***Pembroke Magazine*** *and the summer 1988 issue of* ***Now and Then***.

Design and illustration: Graphic Design Workshop— Darlene Glover

STAND UP

Sister Serena stands in front of the room wearing her dreary nun's habit and her Ivory soap face. She is talking about Cuba.

"The principal export crops are sugar, chemicals and tobacco," Sister says. "The United States doesn't trade with Cuba."

I look around the room. Kids are shifting in their seats, passing notes, or staring out the window. We're dressed alike in dark green blazers: gray trousers for the boys, gray pleated skirts for the girls. I am wearing lime green underpants.

Sister walks back and forth in front of our desks as she talks. Behind her is a pull-down map of Cuba, colored in different shades of green so that by looking at the map we can tell where the mountains or cane fields or evergreen trees are. Every now and then Sister stops pacing and pokes with a long wooden pointer at a patch of green. She walks over to the blackboard and picks up a piece of chalk.

"Cuba is a godless nation," she says and writes NO GOD in big letters on the board.

"Before Castro's takeover, Cuba was a lovely country, a Roman Catholic country. The people were happy then."

I know better.

My sister Ellen lives in Cuba. She likes Fidel. When they are together they talk about American movies. Fidel told Ellen he really hated it when Gary Cooper died.

I have a picture of the two of them, Ellen and Fidel, sitting in a Jeep. Ellen is wearing a madras babushka and no makeup. Fidel is in green army fatigues. I don't think he has any other clothes. They are smiling at each other. The picture stays on my dresser so I can see it when I wake up in the morning but every time my mother comes into my room, she turns it face down.

My parents aren't handling this too well.

One day Ellen was in Asheville working for a dentist, dating artists, and taking voice lessons. The next thing we knew, mom and dad got this telegram from Mexico telling us Ellen was on her way to Cuba to join the revolution.

"What in the hell does she mean by this?" my dad said when Mom showed him the telegram. "The damn revolution was over years ago."

Dad pushed his chair back from the table and let his fork fall onto his plate. Mom always waits until supper to break bad news.

"Now, hon, calm down," she said. "Ellen is just being dramatic. She can't go to Cuba; they don't like Americans there."

"Of course they don't. Cuba is a goddamned communist country. Why would our daughter leave America to live in a country where you can't even vote?"

My parents looked at me.

I kept my eyes on my food and smashed my peas with my fork and mixed them with my mashed potatoes.

I know why Ellen left, but I'm not saying. Every time I try to take up for her my parents twist things around and make me feel like I've chosen Ellen over them. I learned a long time ago to keep my mouth shut.

Ellen left because she's sick of the killing. Everybody she looks up to gets shot. Losing Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy in less than a year was too much.

Mom and Dad sat there staring at me while they sipped their scotch and water. Sometimes I feel like that's all they ever do: sit and stare and drink.

Finally, Mom set her glass down on the table.

"This Cuba business is not to go out of this house," she said. "Your father could lose his job over this."

She picked up her glass, started to take a sip, then set it down.

"Besides, Ellen is not in Cuba, so let's just drop the whole thing."

A week later Ellen's letters started coming, air mail, in light blue envelopes postmarked "Cuba."

Sometimes the letters are addressed to Mom, or to Mom and Dad, but at least twice a month I get one addressed only to me.

Dear Sweetie, one letter said, *you would love it here. You would love the old men in faded hats and the dark women with their brown-eyed babies. The sugar cane fields at sunset look like the marshes of Savannah.*

I don't remember much about Savannah. We moved to the Tennessee mountains when I was five. I do remember once when our family was at the river house. Ellen and I went out on the pier at sunset. As far as you could see, the water was gold and the sky was burning. The marsh grass glowed like it was lit from the inside. Ellen and I stood there grinning at each other. I held my arms out wide and tried to hug the sky. It was the best moment of my life so far.

Ellen is 12 years older than I am, but we've always been close. I think it's because she never fit in with Mom and Dad.

When Ellen was nearly four, Dad left for World War II and Mom was scared of being alone. She carried a pistol in her apron pocket when she went outside to hang up the wash.

The gun wouldn't have done her any good; Mom was afraid to put bullets in it. Ellen has never been scared of anything, and that frightened Mom even more.

After I was born Ellen decided to teach me to be like her so she'd have a friend in the family. She put me on a pony as soon

My sister Ellen lives in Cuba. She likes Fidel. When they are together they talk about American movies. Fidel told Ellen he really hated it when Gary Cooper died.

as I could sit up, and before I was six I could handle her jumpy horse. The two of us went to Wolfman and Frankenstein double features. While the other kids hid under their jackets, Ellen and I giggled, then we took the dark streets home.

I thought I was this really brave kid until my first day of school when I had to walk down those cold marble halls by myself.

That afternoon I came home crying. Instead of going inside, I went to my swing set. I rocked myself back and forth in the swing, scuffling my new saddle shoes in the dirt. Fall was coming. The air itself had changed, dryer, cooler, and the edges of the maples were turning. School was a beginning, my mother had told me, but to me it felt like the end of everything. Ellen saw me from the kitchen window and came to sit down beside me.

"I hate school," I said. "The nuns are mean and they scare me."

Ellen laughed and gave my hand a squeeze.

"They scared me too until I figured out why they were mean," she said. "They're mean because they're unhappy, and they want you to be unhappy too. Ignore them. They can't hurt you because you know their secret."

I smiled at her and nodded, but I still felt little and scared inside.

The next day Sister smacked my hand with a wooden ruler because I answered a question before I was called on. I tried to remember what Ellen had said, but I couldn't ignore the sting of the ruler or the look on Sister's face when she hit me. She looked happy.

I am trying to ignore Sister Serena now as she lists the atrocities Castro was supposed to have inflicted upon the wealthy Cubans. She doesn't even mention what Batista and American businessmen did to the poor Cubans. Sister is really worked up. Her voice is tight and strained.

Across the room is Jorge. Before the revolution, his parents had been wealthy land owners. We have heard at least a thousand times, from Jorge, from the nuns and from the priests on Sunday, how Jorge's family fled in the darkness with only one suitcase for the five of them.

Jorge sits straight in his chair with his hands folded just-so on his desk. His fingernails never get dirty.

I feel weird, kind of weak, like she's talking about somebody in my family, like she's telling private things about us to the whole class.

I hate him.

In sixth grade Sister Therese heard me tell a friend that Jorge and his family got what they deserved. Ellen had said so at dinner the night before.

Sister jerked me up from my seat and pulled me by the elbow to the front of the room. I watched her draw a little circle on the blackboard. She yanked me toward it.

"Put your nose in that circle and do not move until I tell you to."

The circle was two inches above my nose. I had to stand on my tiptoes to reach it. After two minutes I felt sharp pains running from the arches of my feet through my calves to my knees. After five minutes the pain wrapped around my thighs and spread to my back. I breathed in chalk dust; I felt like I was smothering.

For 10 minutes I stood there crying. My nose ran, but I couldn't raise my hand to wipe it. Sister would have hit me. Behind me the kids whispered and giggled. I felt a spitball hit my back.

Finally, Sister Therese pulled me away from the board and pushed me toward my desk.

I looked at Jorge. He was laughing.

Sister Serena is ranting and raving. I try to shut her out, think of something nice, but her voice gets louder and louder. Kids start sitting up in their seats. Jean Walker looks at me and rolls her eyes. Sister is losing it.

"Che Gueverra served as Castro's war minister," she says. "That means it was his job to spread communism to every country in Latin America. Che Gueverra and Fidel Castro were in league with Satan."

I feel weird, kind of weak, like she's talking about somebody in my family, like she's telling private things about us to the whole class.

"As God would have it," Sister says, "Che Gueverra was killed in Bolivia two years ago."

The night that we heard on the news that Che had been murdered, Ellen was staying over. She had her own apartment, but every once in awhile, when she got lonesome, she spent the night in my room. I had twin beds then, and we would lie in the dark and laugh.

The night Che died, Ellen didn't talk. I almost fell asleep waiting for her to say something, then I heard her get up. She put on her robe and walked out of the room. At first I thought she had gone to the bathroom. For a long time I waited, then I fell asleep.

I was deep into a dream about school and not being able to find my classroom when Ellen woke me. She switched on the table lamp and sat next to me on the bed.

Ellen's skin is really white from never lying out in the sun. In the lamplight she looked like an angel or a ghost.

"I've written a poem," she said in a church-like voice. "It's about Che. Listen and tell me what you think."

She started reading in her softest voice, breathing in and out with the words. The poem began with Che dying alone and tortured in a strange land. It ended with his spirit looking down on the Sierra Maestra mountains vowing always to protect Cuba.

I lay awake most of the night thinking about Che. I imagined that the mountains of Cuba were like ours, the mountains Ellen and I hiked each Sunday. Che's soul, I thought, rested among the hemlock and the laurel, and from now on he would walk the mountain

BY JANET HEARNE

paths with me. Lying there in the dark, I thought that I may have loved him.

Ellen didn't tell me at the time, but the next day she mailed the poem to a Cuban official. She had seen his name in a news article. He wrote back to thank her for the poem, and they became friends. When Bobby Kennedy died, this man fixed things so that Ellen could go to Cuba.

Sister Serena is writing on the board again. Her black veil is covered with chalk dust. She has written in big swirly letters: OCTOBER BRIGADE.

"Some young people, college students and others, mistakenly believe that Castro's struggle is a noble one," she says. "The Cuban economy is collapsing and these people are going to Cuba to help with the sugar cane harvest."

She brushes the chalk from her hands and looks at me.

"These people are wrong. Anyone who helps Cuba is going against God's will."

My stomach turns over. I look across the room at Jorge. He is staring at me.

Sister's voice is higher and stronger.

"An American in Cuba has committed not only treason but an unforgivable sin against the Church."

Ellen is not a sinner. She went to Cuba to help the poor, just like Jesus told us to do. Ellen went to help the people who used to be Jorge's servants.

I raise my hand, but Sister ignores me.

"Sister," I say, and my voice breaks.

The kids around me turn in their seats and stare at me like I'm crazy. My face burns, but my hands are cold.

"Sister," I say again, and she turns toward me.

"I didn't ask a question; put your hand down."

"Sister, you're lying."

"What did you say?" Sister screams. "What did you say?" Her face is drawn as tight as a fist. She moves toward me, her hand raised above her head.

Someone gasps and then there is silence.

For a moment Sister and I are frozen face-to-face in the aisle. Beyond her raised hand, I see on the map the island of Cuba, floating green and calm in a clear blue sea.

Janet Hearne, originally from Knoxville, now lives in Jonesborough, Tenn. Her book, ***Only in California****, will be published in July.*

The Former Miner Returns from His First Day as a Service Worker

(at McDonald's — somewhere in Appalachia)

All day he crushed the spongy buns, pawed at
The lids of burger boxes and kiddie pacs
As if they were Chinese puzzles.

All day his hands ticked, ready to latch on
Or heave or curl around a tool
Heavier than a spatula.

All day he rubbed his eyes in the crisp light.
All day the blue tile, the polished chrome, said
Be nimble, be jolly, be quick.

All day he grinned while the public, with bland
Or befuddled faces, scowled over his head
And mumbled, whispered, snarled, and snapped.

All day his co-workers, pink and scrubbed,
Prattled and glided and skipped while he,
All bulk and balk, rumbled and banged.

Near shift's end he daydreamed — of the clang
Of rock on steel, the skreel
Of a conveyor belt, the rattling whine
Of the mantrip, the miner's growl of gears
As it gnarled, toothing at the seam.

He makes his slow way home, shadow among
Roadside shadows, groping back in himself
For that deep sheltering dark.
He had never been so tired.
His hands have never been so clean.

— Mark DeFoe

Mark DeFoe lives in Buckhannon, W. Va. This poem first appeared in the Winter 1988 edition of ***Southern Humanities Review****.*

EDUCATION & THE RE-VISIONING OF APPALACHIA

by Jean Haskell Speer

An Appalachian college student recently wrote: "It seems sort of senseless to spend time and money preparing yourself for a career that will never be pursued if doing so means moving beyond easy driving distance of home. I like to think education is valuable for its own sake, but the fact remains that people expect us to 'do something' with our education and we expect the same of ourselves. We feel pressured by the mainstream notion that we must reach our fullest potential and realize our dreams if it takes marching all over Hell and half of Georgia to do it."

Many parents, particularly in a culture that traditionally values close family ties, may see education not as an opportunity but as a loss. Many Appalachian families now know their foreparents' ways may not be "good enough" any longer, but we must recognize that it often takes courage, real courage, to send a child into higher education. The mountain phrase, "gettin' above your raisin' " is one we all understand. It sometimes takes years for many of us to come to terms with our past, our families, our cultural heritage, if we ever do, after exposure to college. (The irony is, of course, that later we may come to embrace with fondness what we tried so hard to deny.)

Many Appalachians who consider higher education are first-generation college students. Conversely, many of the students who come from outside the region are second- and even third-generation college students. This produces a real difference in the amount of knowledge about the infrastructure of higher education and how to gain access to it. Knowing whom to call about what issues, and at what junctures, is a kind of cultural knowledge learned mostly from acquaintance with the system of higher education. Students should not be denied access to higher education because they lack such knowledge and the aggressiveness to use it, but we know they frequently are so penalized.

Many parents, particularly in a culture that traditionally values close family ties, may see education not as an opportunity but as a loss.

A young woman from southwest Virginia had been accepted into the engineering program at Virginia Tech. But just two days before the beginning of school, a member of the faculty received a call from a mutual friend, the young woman's high school principal. He was despairing because the young woman had been unable to receive financial assistance and simply did not have the financial wherewithal to come to school; she was taking a job at the local Piggly-Wiggly and delaying college. The faculty member quickly called someone in the Financial Aid Office who explained that there had not been money available when the young woman applied, but that some aid had been unaccepted and was now available. The young woman was on campus the next day for the start of school. Knowing how to work with the system aggressively made the difference, but one has to be aware of the process to succeed. We need to do a better job of educating families in our region about academic processes and procedures.

Stereotypes about the region and its people may be subtle but they are pervasive. They infect our public schools and our institutions of higher learning. Some of my students in Appalachian Studies tell me reactions of their friends to our classes: "You're studying what? Why would you want to study hillbillies?" And, unfortunately, not only students but some of our faculty suffer from a cultural elitism that sees the university as a bastion of "culture" in a cultural "void" and would like to disassociate universities from their Appalachian location and heritage.

A recent editorial in a local newspaper addressed this issue. The writer heard a middle-school student use the term, "grit." When asked what it meant, the youngster replied, "You KNOW. A hillbilly, a redneck, one of those people from the backwoods." She went on to explain that "grits are the kids who come from off in the hills, they have thick accents, and dress crummy."

It is small wonder, when one's cultural heritage is devalued and ridiculed by so many others, that it is difficult for students to have the kind of self-esteem needed to brave such assaults when they go to institutions of higher education. For many, it is safer not to add all this pressure to the normal rigors of getting a degree. I find, too, that many students from our region who do come to college are intelligent, creative, have a strong work ethic and a strong desire to succeed. Yet, their cultural background keeps them from being "pushy"; they are often the most self-effacing students I meet. This may be a factor in keeping some other Appalachian students from considering college at all, even when they have the abilities to be successful.

Some campuses are coming to realize that Appalachian students may need to be recognized as a minority group because they have been denied fair access to educational opportunities and because some of them require special assistance to succeed. At Ohio State University, for example, a program has been developed to offer workshops for rural Appalachian students on "How to Succeed in College." The Young Scholars Program

fosters academic skills, beginning in the sixth grade and continuing for six years. A similar program, Grass Roots Talent Search at the University of Chicago, assists students from rural areas in considering and preparing for an urban university. Another program in West Virginia identifies young "scholars" in junior high school and counsels them through high school and college. At Virginia Tech, there has been discussion of identifying and assisting Appalachian students as a minority group. Some people in the region may question or resist the minority label as stigmatizing, but the "stigma" of being Appalachian already exists in the minds of a culturally-elite world. It may be better to accept the minority designation and use it to provide help and opportunity so often denied Appalachian young people.

In Appalachian Studies, we try to help students understand their cultural heritage and how to value it; we encourage them to be part of their region's future development; we validate many of their life experiences; and we try to arm them with the history of the region, a sense of its complexity, and with skills in critical thinking. I use the term "arm" on purpose: these students need to develop an intellectual militancy about themselves and their region. It does produce effects. One young woman from Appalachia was greatly offended when a professor repeatedly and jokingly used stereotypes about the region in class. Because of her awakened consciousness, she confronted the professor and ultimately took her case to her dean.

Any university benefits from adding Appalachian brains, worldview, values, determination and civility to its student population. (I mention civility because in my experience Appalachian students are the most courteous, ingenuous and level-headed students I encounter.) We need them in higher education as much as they need us.

Excerpted from a keynote address sponsored by the State Council of Higher Education for District Seven guidance counselors, Abingdon, Va., October 1989. Jean Haskell Speer was then Director of Appalachian Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg. She is now director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tenn.

Listening to Elvis and James

by Raleigh Wynn

Raleigh Wynn believes deeply what he was taught by some of his early teachers, namely that education is the key to success for African-Americans. He graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1969 with a degree in business administration and marketing. Then he returned to his native East Tennessee to teach high school. He took a hiatus from teaching to work in the corporate world and to run for state representative, but he returned to education in 1989. He has worked for the Cincinnati Board of Education, the Knox County School Board and for Knoxville College.

Now Wynn has gone back to school, pursuing a graduate degree in education at East Tennessee State University. He recently addressed the subject of multiculturalism before a class of prospective teachers.

When you talk about multicultural education, the first thing people get in their minds is a black/white situation. But women are also involved — different cultures: Indians, Asians.

I consider myself an individual who fought in the second Civil War. I came through the 60s during the time of assassinations, sit-ins and demonstrations. In that time "multicultural education" meant listening to Elvis Presley as well as James Brown and the Temptations.

When I first started teaching in 1970, I taught at Rule High School, which was the only integrated school in the city of Knoxville. So I gained experience teaching white kids, kids from a different background. I didn't find it to be a problem.

When I went back to Knoxville after college, I went to a junior high school I had attended. It was going through an integration phase. They were taking out black teachers and putting in white teachers. A lot of white teachers couldn't make the adjustment. They were miserable because they were put into a different culture.

Teachers should be able to teach anybody. If we're going to be teachers of the new century, multiculturalism is something we're going to have to understand. You're not always going to be teaching in certain areas. Even if you're teaching in Greene

Raleigh Wynn *Photo by Pat Arnow*

Listening

County or Washington County [Tennessee] — I know all these counties have a few black kids here and there — how do you deal with them in class? Are they pushed to the side and paid no attention? Some teachers have a problem fitting these kids in. That creates more problems that are passed on to other generations.

What are some of the myths we have about multiculturalism? We see sitcoms on television where blacks are put in certain situations, females are put in certain situations. How much of that shapes our children? Do you go along with these myths or do you try to introduce some reality, make the kids really look at these programs and recognize the stereotypes? I think sometimes *we* get into these stereotypes, and that's the way we perceive even the kids sitting in our classrooms.

East Tennessee State could be a model of multicultural education. It would be as beneficial for white kids as for blacks. These kids are growing up in a world of changing color ratios. Not all of them are going to stay in East Tennessee. They'll have to deal with different kinds of people. And the more education they have, the easier it will be for them. We can eliminate a lot of the mistrust. It's never too early to teach respect for different cultures.

I was in a seminar at Science Hill High School [in Johnson City, Tenn.] recently. One girl there did not believe in interracial dating. She was a white girl, and she was very adamant about it. She said, "What about the children? How are the kids going to live in this society?" I admired her because she was expressing herself, but you could tell she had heard it from some older people. We all talked about it, and she got to hear another side.

We got to talking about Malcolm X. This same girl talked about black kids wearing the hat with the X on it. And a lot of these kids don't know anything about Malcolm X. They didn't read the book. She said, "I'm going to read that book, and I'll know more than they know about him." She wanted to expand herself, to find out about things. Kids, especially white kids, should be encouraged to go see *Malcolm X*. I was always encouraged to go see movies about people of different cultures. I was always encouraged to stand up and pledge allegiance to the flag, to sing "God Bless America." And I feel very good about that. Still, as I grew and learned, I found out I had things to offer, too.

To me that's what being in college is all about. I may not even be back here next quarter. Because it's taken me all quarter to adjust. See, I'm old. I'm 45. It's been 20 years since I've been in school. It's hard for me to go back to reading the books and writing the papers. I'm getting better, but it's been a struggle.

I'm a former basketball player. Competition doesn't scare me. The other day I took a job at Penney's, working straight commission. You know how that is: everybody running and taking your customers and making me go do little funny jobs. So I had to get in there and start competing. If you give black kids a fair chance to compete, you'll have no problem with them. Let them get in there and battle. No matter how they do, then, you know as a teacher that you've been fair.

Preparation for teachers will be a major issue for all of us in the next 10 years. Even if you're in a school that's all white, multicultural studies are necessary if you're really going to educate your students. Some of them go to the Army or Navy, to different colleges. When they go to these places they run into kids from Harlem, from Detroit, from New Jersey.

I went to the University of Cincinnati for my formal education. It was different. I was a little country boy from Knoxville who ran into these other kids. The New Yorkers seemed to know everything. One girl — I'll never forget it — she said, "Raleigh, you old Tennessee hick." You have to be prepared for those things. It didn't bother me. Because, see, I had some things ground rooted that the kids from Harlem didn't have. I had some things to offer to them, too: how to get along with people, how to smile, how to trust people. Some of your kids are going to experience the same thing. If they go to these places and are in contact with these kids and have never learned anything about them, they're going to be uncomfortable, they're going to get taken advantage of. We as teachers and parents need to expose our kids to the world.

Teachers have a lot of power. You get these kids in kindergarten, in first grade. People always remember their first grade teacher. That's like mother, like father: these people shape your thinking.

To have multicultural education, you need the help of parents. How you're brought up in the home, what is said, how you are taught to look at people, all are important. Alvin Poussaint was quoted by Karen Peterson in a *USA Today* article called "Helping Black Kids Prevail Over Prejudice." He says black parents have two jobs to do: raise their kids to adulthood and prepare them to live in society. You see a lot of gangs and black-on-black crime in our society. He says blacks grow up in a society where they are frequently despised. That's a hard burden to bear when you're young. It's easier when you get older.

I don't have the same problems I had when I was 20 or 30. I'm not upset now that I was passed over for certain situations strictly because of the color of my skin. You're told in elementary school that if you prepare yourself, if you do certain things you're supposed to do, you'll be given the same opportunities as everybody else. When that doesn't happen you get disillusioned, and your attitude changes. To resist growing up to go to prison, being on drugs, being despised as the lowest in society: it takes a lot to overcome that. I attribute my escape to being able to be educated, to being around people who were open-minded and who showed me that everybody does not feel that way. When kids can get this type of understanding then they have a chance to move on.

East Tennessee State can offer this kind of education if they open up. I know that the question of multiculturalism was one of the considerations when the Education Department here lost its accreditation. To me, that was uncalled for. That didn't even have to be put on the list, because the question could have been remedied so easily. You just employ people who are progressive. If we don't have people who are progressive, we're just wasting our time here.

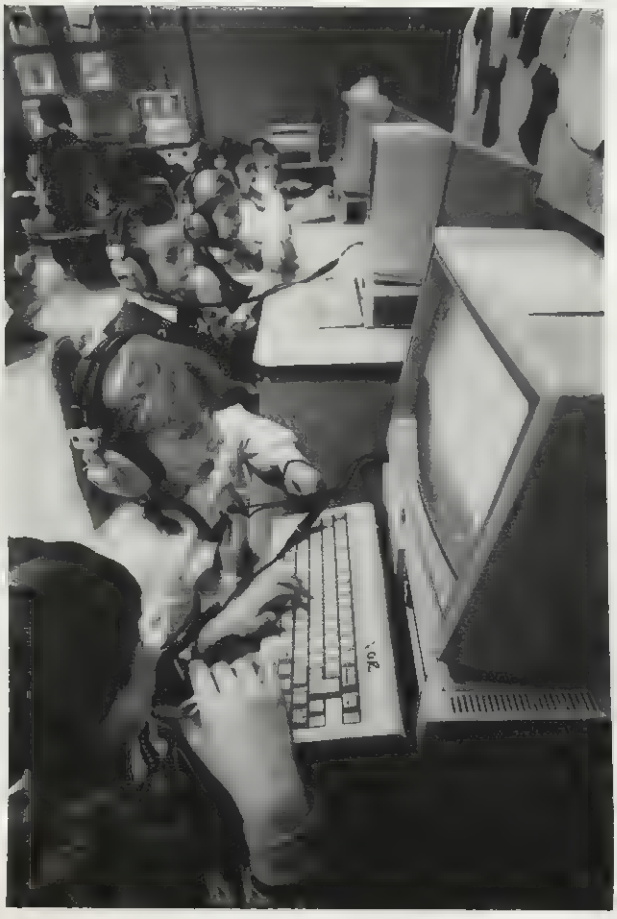
Poussaint says that the learning process includes activities that allow students to take what they've learned and use it in the community, that education should fit the learner instead of the learner being made to fit the education. That's how I look at education in the year 2000.

Education in Appalachia

Marion Post-Wolcott. Courtesy of the Southern Appalachian Photographic Archives, Mars Hill College

(Above) **Children in rural school, Morehead, Ky., August 1940**

Lunch at s September



Kenneth Murray

Kenneth Murray

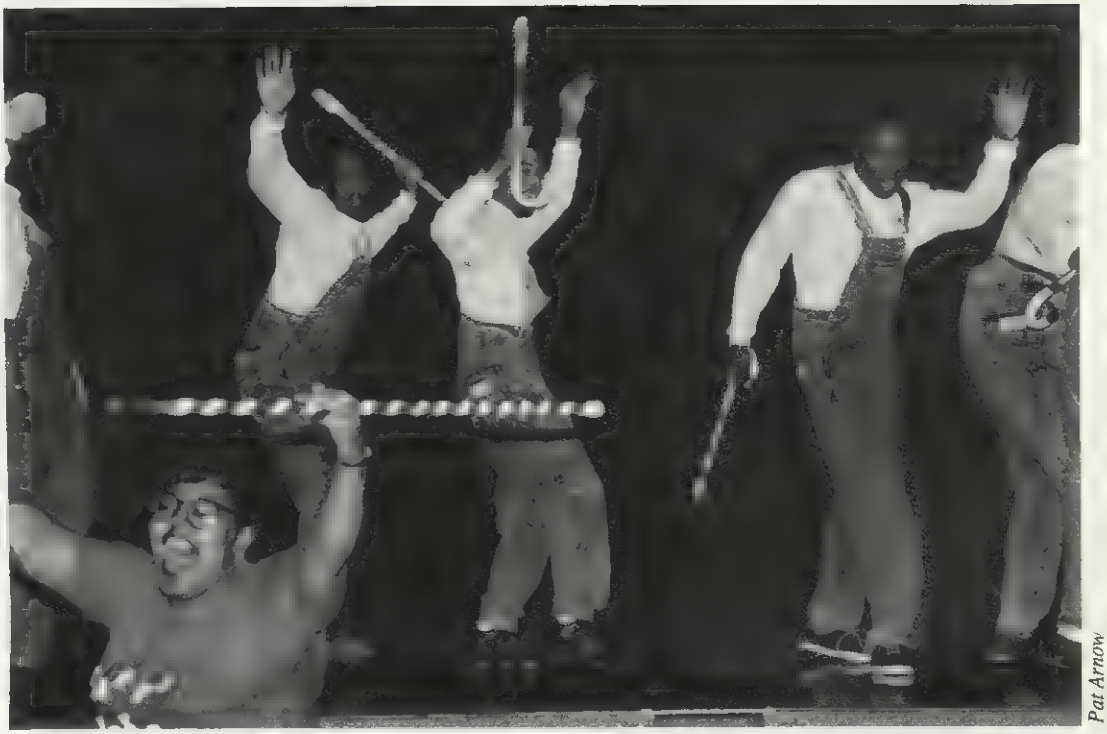
First grade students use IBM programs and computers to learn phonetic alphabet, then write stories on computers. Panther Elementary School, McDowell County, W. Va.

High School Prom, Johnson City, Tenn.

Kenneth Murray

Marion Post-Wolcott, Library of Congress

school, Breathitt County, Ky., · 1940



Pat Arnow

(Left)
Blount County, Tenn., school lunch

(Right)
Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity and sweethearts performing at a stepshow at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn., October 1990

Now and Then

Memories of School

Confessions Of A Bad Student

by Jo Carson

It was an attitude problem. My parents very quickly developed their own attitude. "Get out of that bed and get dressed!"

"But my head hurts."

"My stomach hurts."

"My heart hurts."

"My feet hurt."

It never worked.

I had a five minute walk to school. It took me 20 to 30 minutes — you can find amazing things on the way to school, especially if you don't want to go. When I showed up for the third or fourth time in the week in Mrs. Crouch's office for being late, she wanted to know what in the dickens was wrong with me. I said, "I'm slow. I've always been slow; my mother is slow." Mrs. Crouch bit her tongue to keep from laughing, and after my punishment had been administered — these were the days of corporal punishment — she called my mother to tell her what I had said. They both laughed. My family remembers this story and reminds me of it regularly. I don't remember it. I do remember lots of others.

The fashion these days is to claim some sort of learning disability to explain trouble in school. Dyslexia is popular. Not me. I had an attitude.

"She's as stubborn as a mule."

And I was. But, especially early on, school was boring compared to the fantasies I made for myself, and I preferred the fantasies. I preferred the fantasies for five and a half weeks out of every six weeks — report card time — and I would regret them for the other a half week and resolve to do better. Further corporal punishment or fear of it inspired the resolve, but it didn't last.

I lied on a day-by-day basis.

"I didn't have any homework."

"There wasn't any note."

I became what is known as a problem child because nothing improved my participation in school. I didn't have a behavior problem exactly — I wasn't difficult to handle in the classroom — I just didn't do the work. I was absent in mind if not in body. I was never held back a grade, so I learned enough to get by and pass the tests, but I don't know how. It wasn't voluntary.

It was about fourth grade that I developed the most extensive and long lived of all my fantasies. I was an alien, born into a human body for a reason that I did not yet know. It was a job of some sort that had to be done, a very important job, and I would know what the job was when the time came to do it. I might even die of it — I was afraid of that — but everything that happened to me, in school, at home, everywhere, was training for this job, and if I learned it right, I wouldn't die when I finally came to do the job. It was a big, rather all-consuming job in itself. Within the fantasy, the stuff presented in school was not nearly so important as learning to survive the experience of school. If I was bored to tears, there was a reason, and I had to learn to deal with it, cope with it, look at it and keep myself alive in it, because it would be important later on.

Fourth grade was a cardinal year. We moved. I changed schools from Henry Johnson to North Side, and I was prepared for the event by my parents: "You can turn over a new leaf. Nobody will know you, and if you straighten up and fly right, we won't have any more of this trouble. . . ." So I resolved. But my teacher in the new school was our neighbor in the old neighborhood, and she knew me. Everybody seemed to know me, and the new leaf stuff was gone with the wind.

You couldn't pay me money to be a child in school again.

"She's not stupid. She's very creative. She just won't do the work." My school day ended at 4:30. I stayed in almost every day sitting there looking at homework I hadn't done the night before. And I was in trouble at home if I had to stay in; I stayed in trouble.

The new leaf mythology was a bigger problem than I knew at the time: some of the folks at North Side had taught my father and his brothers and had seen the behavior patterns repeated over and over. But I didn't know my father was a bad student until 30 years later. I'm coming to that story.

What happened at North Side was that I fulfilled everybody's expectations: I lived in my own world and didn't do my homework and lied and lied and lied about it and everything related to school. What happened to me was a subtle shift in focus. The alien fantasy was still in operation. But I shifted from surviving this arbitrary authority called school (and by association, other authorities like my parents) to consciously resisting it. It was an ass-backwards, miserable way to live, but it was — and I remember the feeling even now — my choice and not somebody else's.

By high school, there were some subjects I liked— literature, the arts — and I made decent grades in those. Everything else was still questionable. I spent a lot of time in summer school. The counselor in summer school told me I should forget about college and learn a trade. I determined then to go to college. I spent eight years in and out of college, and I finally graduated with enough hours for two majors and two minors, and the only way I got my grade point average up high enough to graduate was to take more and more and more courses in things I found I loved. I made good grades in them.

Twenty years later, my first response when somebody tells me to do something is no. It is automatic. But I can curb my tongue now and think about whether or not I want to do it, and then make a decision. I work best for and by myself (or with a team of equals). Those times when the writing has not paid and I've been obliged to get "a real job," I resent supervision, and I feel like I'm back in fourth grade. I find myself ready to cut my own throat just to resist authority, no other reason. The patterns go deep in me.

And the fantasy that sustained me for so long, the alien business, did prepare me for what I do now. It made an observer of me. It was a removal that hunted for perspective and reason, and that serves me well.

I'm fixing to write about some of this in a new play. It is why I can say it out loud now, some of these things have taken a long time to admit to myself. The sort of failure it represents in this culture is not easy to live with.

You couldn't pay me money to be a child in school again.

I realized I had to write about being a bad student one afternoon (I forget the circumstance and the rest of the conversation) when my father leaned across the table to get his glass and confessed, "I was a terrible student, you know. I did the same thing you did, and it took World War II to beat the stubbornness out of me."

Jo Carson is a playwright, poet and author of children's books. She has given readings of her works across the United States and in Europe. Her works include, among others, ***Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet*** *(poetry),* ***Pulling My Leg*** *(a children's book), and* ***Daytrips*** *(a Kesselring Award-winning play). Carson lives in Johnson City, Tenn.*

Enrolling At Mars Hill College

by Boyd S. Ray

When I got ready to go to school at Mars Hill College, I put all my clothes and the usual paraphernalia one takes to school in an old trunk. My Daddy and I tied it to the back of our old 1932 Chevrolet, and he drove me to school. That was in the fall of 1935. After unloading the trunk, Daddy started on home because he wanted to get home before dark, if possible. The roads were not as good then as they are today. I hurried over to the Administration Building where they were registering the new students.

I had not made prior financial arrangements because I did not know if money would be available. I had sent a copy of my high school transcript and been accepted and assigned a room in one of the boys' dormitories. I got in line at the first table. This was where you made financial arrangements. It was a small table, about three feet by five feet wide. A small man with black horn rimmed glasses was sitting behind it. I learned later that he was a Baptist preacher. On his right was a large cigar box into which he put the money he collected. On his left was a stack of forms he used to record information from the students. By listening to those ahead of me in line, I got the idea of what was going on. When my turn came I stepped up, laid exactly 35 dollars on the table, stepped back and said, "Sir, that is all the money I have, but I want to go to college, and I want a job."

With a start he looked at the cash money on the table, looked up at me, then looked down again at the money, then up again at me, and quick as a flash, he scooped up that money with his right hand and pointed his left forefinger at me and said, "We'll give you a job."

He put the money in the box, closed the lid and got one of the forms on his left and started asking me such routine questions as what was my name, where did I live, who was my Daddy, where did he live, etc. Finally he asked, "And what does your Daddy do?"

"He is a distiller," I replied.

Very slowly, without raising his head, he dropped the pencil to the table, spread both hands out flat, then, slowly looking up, asked, "What did you say?" (Now you have got to remember that Mars Hill was a Baptist school, and always held strictly to the code of morals and dogma, and what this man had heard did not fit the mold.)

"I said, he is a distiller," I replied.

"And what does he distill?" he inquired, as his hand

Jo Carson Scott Allan Jacobs Boyd S. Ray Laurene Scalf

Mars Hill

slowly moved toward the cigar box.

"He distills essential oils," I told him with a straight face.

"Would you mind explaining that a little further, please," he said, as he opened the top of the cigar box. It was easy to see this man was suffering from a great deal of tribulation.

"Sure," I replied with confidence. I explained to him that my Daddy took the small plant that grows wild in the mountains, the plant called teaberry and, by using the same type of equipment and the same process as in making moonshine whiskey, you came out with a red oil called mountain tea oil, and it was known in the trade as an essential oil. I further explained that it was sold to the large drug and medicine firms and used in making medicines, flavorings, etc. In fact, his largest customer was the Beech Nut Chewing Gum Company.

"Oh," he said with relief, as he closed the lid on the cigar box and went on with his questioning.

He gave me a job working in the kitchen.

Bored of Education

An Interview with Elbert Childress

by Scott Allan Jacobs

The only new clothes I can remember that we ever got was when we was getting ready to go to school. The state of West Virginia, the school board, they knowed the people that really couldn't afford to buy the overalls and shirts and pants, and so they would come and get you about a week before school started, and they would take you to a big store — some five and dime; I forget the name of it. They'd buy you clothes. I think it was two pairs of pants, two shirts, a coat, and a pair of shoes and some socks, and that you got before you started school.

You got them every year right before school and then you wore 'em to school and when you'd come home you'd hang 'em up. You didn't wear 'em around the house. You'd wear your old stuff, anything you could get your hands on, but you left your good clothes for wearing to school.

I went to school at Anawalt Junior High in West Virginia, a little ol' bitty brick building up on a hill. It'd probably take you a good anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour to get there. You'd walk down the road for a while and you got on the railroad track and you'd walk down the railroad track till you got to school.

It was supposed to have been nine grades. I think there was six rooms. History was mostly what they had. You'd take maybe 45 minutes or 50 minutes for each class. Mostly what you had, though, was reading, writing and arithmetic, West Virginia history, and you had a little bit of geography.

Them teachers was hard on you. If they caught you doing something, they'd go on you in a minute. It ain't like today, where you'd get arrested for child abuse. They'd take a board out, boy, they'd wear you out! And then you'd go sit down; you didn't even think about raising no more ruckus.

I think I was always sort of partial to the West Virginia history. They used to give us a little handbook on that; it wasn't a very big book. Seemed to me that's what I liked the best. I never was too fond of ciphering and letters.

I played basketball. At the time, I was the tallest joker in the school. I used to walk down the hall and I could look over everybody's head because I was the tallest kid in the doggone place. I used to love basketball, but they had a rule. If you hit a certain age, you couldn't play basketball anymore. The ninth grade, that was my last year for basketball. So the principal come to me and wanted me to keep going through school, but he said, "I can't put you back on the team because you're over age." So I told him, "The heck with it then. I just ain't coming back to school." So I just never did go back. There was a lot of us that stopped at the ninth grade. There was mighty few people that could go on through high school.

I wished I had studied harder. I wish that I put my head to the stone a little better. I could have been more educated. I probably would have had a better job or a better paying job, and it might even have been better for me in my head like a smarter head. I can get along on my own. I can do things on my own. I'm not really a stone dummy, but I'm not really as bright as I should be — or I could be. Let's put it that way: if I was in school today, if I had it all to do over again, I would have put head in the books and got to knowin' what I was going to school for instead of going to play basketball or pinch a girl on the bottom now and then. Instead of doing that, I would have had my head in those books. That's what I should have done.

Elbert Childress moved West Virginia to Pennsylvania in 1957. He is employed by Congoleum Corporation as a tow truck driver. He married Joyce Terry in 1963 and has one son, Matthew, and two daughters, Debra and Gail. He is a sportsman who also enjoys oil painting.

Scott Allan Jacobs, a 1985 graduate of Valley Forge Military Academy, has an Associate of Science Degree fromn Brandywine College and a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Widener University.

"This school has many children from many places, but in the end they all—most—adjust . . . learn to get along . . . be like the others —learn to want to be like the others . . . "

"I want em to be happy, but I don't know as I want em to—to—"

"Adjust?"

— Detroit schoolteacher to Gertie
in Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker*

My Mom, Mrs. Mullins and LBJ

by Laurene Scalf

I was four years old, sitting at the kitchen table, practicing my ABCs. My mother left the washtub and scrub board, wiped the soapy water from her arms and wrote a letter on a piece of paper. "Which one is that?" she asked. I looked at the little gray snake. "Ess," I said. Her smile told me I was right. She was my first teacher, and I was teacher's pet.

I couldn't wait to go to school. I wore out my mother's patience by asking over and over again during the summer I was six, "How long till school starts?" When the glad day finally arrived, my parents presented to me a blue plaid bookbag. I carried it as conspicuously as I could down the railroad track, across the trestle and up the hill to the one-room schoolhouse where all the coal camp kids in Roda, Va., began their formal schooling.

Only the first grade was in the one-room schoolhouse. Mrs. Mullins, the warm and hefty teacher, loved school as much as I did, and I was drawn to her like a fly to honey. I loved the smell of pencil lead and the pulpy paper in my Blue Horse writing tablet. I loved the wood and wrought iron desks with scarred tops and seats polished by small bottoms. But most of all I loved the fragrant, smooth-paged books. Where did Dick and Jane really live, I wondered. Where did their grandpa work? Did little sister Sally's dresses smell as fresh as they looked? What did they feed Puff?

Each student was required to read one page of the reader aloud each day. One day Mrs. Mullins hung a chart on the wall. Our names were listed down one side of the chart. Each student would receive a gold star for each day he or she read aloud without missing a word. At the end of eight days, David Slagle and I were running neck and neck. My knees shook as I took my turn, but I got every word perfect. I held my breath as he read and exhaled as silently as I could when he tripped. My prize was a little green plastic compact. I didn't think to ask two questions: Surely Mrs. Mullins would not have given a compact to David. How did she know he wouldn't win? And what use did a six-year-old have for face powder?

When I was in fourth grade, the coal mine where my father worked shut down, and we joined the northern migration of unemployed Appalachians and settled in Lima, Ohio. It was another planet. Shawnee Elementary School had two or three different rooms for each grade, each room with its own teacher. There were art classes and music classes and something called a cafeteria where I stood in the doorway on the first day, clutching my 30 cents, and had no idea what to do. Nobody looked like me. Nobody talked like me.

I wish I could say that Mrs. Crites was as warm and inspiring as Mrs. Mullins. She was, in fact, slim and beautiful and thought it fun to call on me in class so that she and the other kids could laugh at my accent. It made me mad. So I made damn sure that I always had the right answer. Soon the kids who always picked me

Buying a Suit for Graduation

by Boyd S. Ray

I don't remember getting any presents for my graduation in 1935. But my Daddy did manage to give me a $20 bill about two weeks before graduation. He told me to go buy myself some clothes to wear when I graduated.

You did not find a suit for a young man in any of the stores in Mountain City (Tenn.) at that time. It was necessary to go to one of the bigger towns nearby to shop for most clothes. So the next Saturday I got my friend, Dean Walsh, who was graduating with me, to go with me to Bristol to buy myself a suit and related clothes.

We hitchhiked, starting early in the morning. It was no problem to get rides then. Times were hard all over, and most people felt it in some way; therefore, they were more ready to help a person. Also, the crime rate for hitchhikers was not bad then, and people were not scared. We arrived in Bristol by late morning and started shopping on State Street to get prices at several different places before buying anywhere.

I remember most of the prices we paid that day for the different items. I got home with some small change, less than a dollar, left out of that $20 after buying the following:

1 suit	$12.50
1 hat	1.99
1 shirt	.75
1 pair shoes	2.59
1 necktie	.25
1 belt	.35
1 pair socks	.20
2 hamburgers	.30
2 bottles beer	.30
1 pack cigarettes	.15
TOTAL	$19.38

We hitchhiked home late that afternoon loaded with packages and 62 cents left over. I sure was proud of that new suit come graduation.

Boyd S. Ray wrote his memoirs for his children and grandchildren. These stories are excerpted from that work. Other excerpts have appeared in Mountain City's newspaper ***The Tomahawk****, in* ***The Mountain Laurel*** *and in the alumni publications from Mars Hill and Milligan Colleges.*

My Mom

last for team games in gym class picked me first for spelling bees.

This was 1959, and northern schools were integrated. There was one black boy in my class at Shawnee, and every time we students were paired off for any activity, I was paired with Adrian. We never spoke to one another as we stood yoked in the misery of being different. It was my first lesson in the connection between race and class discrimination.

The next year we moved again. And the year after that. And the year after that. And the year after that. Each move meant another first day in a roomful of strangers pitiless as terrorists and children can be. With the last move, though, I got lucky. This was my first year of high school and the first year of consolidation of two schools. I looked and talked like everyone else by now, so everyone from Bluffton thought I was from Beaverdam, and everyone from Beaverdam thought I was from Bluffton.

When I was a sophomore, the guidance counselor called me into his office. He wanted to recommend me for one of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs called Upward Bound. I would spend eight weeks the coming summer on a college campus, taking classes and "exploring my options." He explained that the program was for "promising students" who might not go to college because of "disadvantaged circumstances." Just say it, I thought, it's for smart kids who are poor. I didn't care what they called it. It sounded like heaven to me. So I spent the summer of 1966 on the campus at Bowling Green State University, taking classes in social psychology, creative writing and history. The teachers were idealistic and passionate about their work, about politics, about art, about living.

Upward Bound was a crash course in truth. There were 100 students. Eighty-nine of them were black, three were Hispanic, and the rest of us were white. There had never been more than one or two blacks in the schools I had attended. There had been a few Hispanics, the children of migrant workers passing through to pick tomatoes. Some of the black students felt the whites had no right to be there. This program was for them. What did we know about poverty? They were openly contemptuous of us, even hostile. Over the summer I learned what it was to be hated. I also learned that all of my life I had been fed a steady dose of lies. I had been taught that all black people were the same, that they didn't think or feel the way we did, that they weren't as smart or as industrious or as clean and certainly not as deserving. Meeting those kids, becoming friends with some of them, forced me to look bigotry in the eye, and what I saw made me sick at heart. I thought of Adrian and regretted that we had never talked to one another.

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The day I left for college, I was scared and elated and felt guilty that my mother cried. Bowling Green had a very good English department. I greedily took too many courses and struggled to keep up. I sat in the student union with a writing group and timorously offered my work (which I'd kept hidden in the bottom of a wardrobe at home) up for consideration. I reunited with some of my old Upward Bound friends, and we'd sit up all night debating and laughing and trying to figure out what truth really was. It was 1968, the country was in the midst of a cultural revolution, and I felt my life was just beginning.

For some of my former schoolmates, life was ending in Vietnam. Lyndon Johnson had affected their lives, too. As I began my sophomore year, I found it harder to study, harder to care about the history of Western civilization or my algebra requirement. I began to eschew classrooms for the campus green to hear lectures on the destruction of civilization in a small Southeast Asian country. My brother Curt was drafted. On May 4, 1970, four students were killed by the National Guard at Kent State, a couple of hours away from Bowling Green. On May 5, I left Bowling Green and went to live with friends in the Mexican section of Toledo. I lived upstairs from the office of La Raza Unida, where I learned the sad history of those Hispanic children who had ridden the school bus for a few weeks each fall.

My father's daughter, I moved around Ohio a lot during the next two years. Then I decided to move to San Francisco. I went home to tell my parents. My mother cried. My father yelled.

"You just don't want me to have any freedom," I accused.

"No," said my father, "I just don't want you to be at the mercy of the world, because the world ain't got no mercy." I had already learned that lesson in Mrs. Crites's class.

After a couple of years in San Francisco, I decided to go back to school. By 1974, Berkeley, like the rest of the country, had settled down a lot. There were still political rallies in Sproul Plaza, but they were quieter, almost sedate. The biggest ruckus there was raised daily by Holy Hubie, a hellfire and brimstone preacher, and half a dozen drummers who congregated there on Sunday afternoons.

Contrary to my expectations, the English department at Berkeley laid less stress on individual creativity and more stress on theory and criticism than did Bowling Green. I was forced to think hard, and I liked it. I fell in love with Herman Melville. I took a writing course from Ishmael Reed. I didn't always like his beliefs, but he taught me a lot about writing.

Sitting in Sproul Plaza on my last day of classes, I looked at the fountain in the middle of the square and thought about the old water pump in the yard of Roda School. I thought about Mrs. Mullins. What if she had been like Mrs. Crites? Would I have loved school so much then? What if there had been no Upward Bound? Would I have gone to college at all? Most important, what if my mother had not read to me when I was little, had not shown me the magic in the alphabet? I imagined that influential trio — my mother, Mrs. Mullins and Lyndon Baines Johnson — sitting side by side on the edge of the fountain and smiling at me. I smiled back. "Thanks," I said.

Laurene Scalf now lives and learns in Johnson City, Tenn.

Tom Howze

And Not a Single Arm Rotted Off

Memories of a One-Room Schoolhouse

I graduated from high school in 1930. The banks were failing then and my father lost the money he'd saved for years in a bank in Erwin. I decided I'd work my way through college. I went over to Dean Burleson at the [East Tennessee State] University and told him I had graduated third in my class, the highest boy. He said, "Well, we're looking for a nice clean-looking young man to dip ice cream over at the cafeteria." I dipped ice cream there for two years. I lived in the dormitory. My mother sent me a dollar or two a week for spending money.

I got through the first year. My father wasn't real well, but he was still working. My mother said, "You better go down and apply for a job teaching school." I went down and applied but prayed all summer that I wouldn't get a job. I wanted to go back to school. My prayers were answered until the day before school started. The superintendent called and said they had a job for me. My mother said, "You go down and sign up for that job." Now I had purposely not taken the courses I needed to be certified. When Mr. Gentry offered me the job, I told him I wasn't certified. He said, "Well, what the hell are you doing here then?"

I said, "My mother sent me."

Of course, my mother was furious with me. She said, "You'll be certified next year, young man." She registered me for the next three quarters, and I got certified. Well, I prayed all summer long that I wouldn't get a job again, and the Lord answered my prayers until the Friday before school was to start on Monday. I got the call from Mr. Gentry. He said, "Are you certified?" I told him I was, and he said, "I have a one-teacher school over at Bumpass Cove, and you can have it."

I got my cousin to take me down there on Sunday, and I found a place to stay. It had been the mining company boarding house, but nobody boarded there now but me. It was run by "Uncle" John White and "Aunt" Doll White. He was about 85 and she was about 80. I paid $11 a month for board five days a week. I went home every Friday and back every Sunday.

When I started teaching there, I thought I knew everything. I'd had Classroom Management with Hodge Mathes. I'd had Introduction to Psychology with Dr. Wheeler, and I'd had Child Psychology and Adolescent Psychology and English. I was rather self-confident. I had all my lessons planned. By 10:30 I had gone through my whole day's program, and I didn't have another thing to teach. I said, "Children, go out and play." I let them play until 12 o'clock. I got some stories together and some poems to read. I went out on the porch and looked up at the mountain and said, "Lord, if you'll get me out of this place, I'll never come back until the day I die." But I stayed two years and had a wonderful time.

Bumpass Cove was a mining community that had fallen upon hard times. The fathers were working one or two days a week in the mines and making a few dollars a day. They traded at the commissary, taking it out mostly in soup beans, things that would last. The children had no books, no clothes. Many of them came to school barefoot. Every weekend I'd get clothes and shoes from the Red Cross and from friends to try to keep the children in school. There was a personal reason for that: I had to have 25 of them to keep the school open. I had eight grades, 25 to 30 students altogether.

My family lived on a farm outside of Erwin and my mother had canned a lot of tomatoes that year, and she had a lot of potatoes. So I begged her to let me have some tomatoes and potatoes. I'd set a pot of watery soup on the old pot-bellied stove, and the children had something hot to eat about three times a week.

I didn't have a car to drive between the Cove and Erwin. But there was a Bump-

Tom Howze *Photo by Pat Arnow*

Single Arm

ass Cove girl who would go to Erwin and stay with her sister during the week and attend high school. Her father would take me to Erwin when he went to pick her up and pick me up when he brought her back.

About that time a law was passed requiring children to have smallpox vaccinations. In an uneducated and isolated community, people were afraid of a smallpox vaccination. They had heard that some people's arms rotted off and that some people died. I began to get notes from the parents saying "Don't let my youngun get any vaccination because I'm afraid his arm will rot off." I wrote back that it was the law. The child either had to have the vaccination or stay out of school. It created quite a stir.

The school sat up on a hill with high steps in the front. The windows in the classroom opened up right onto the mountain. You could open them up and step right out. While I was helping the nurse take off her coat and bring in her bag, every child in the school went out those windows like a flock of quail. They ran and hid in the mountains, and I couldn't get them back in again. I arranged for the nurse to come back another day. I didn't tell them what day it was, and I locked those windows. It was against the law to lock them, but I did. They all took the vaccination. And not a single arm rotted off.

Dennis was 16 years old and in the third grade. He came to me one day and said he could make 50 cents a day rolling a wheelbarrow in the mines. I said, "If I were you, Dennis, I'd take the job." He didn't learn well, being slightly retarded. His mother said he was "quare." But he wasn't as quare as you'd think, because he got a job on the railroad and reared a family. He became a good, decent citizen, and so did his children.

I had been taught in classroom management classes that one should visit the homes to get an insight into the child and the parents. I got a note one time from Dennis's mother, who also had a granddaughter in my class, asking me to come see her. I thought this was a good opportunity to put some of those classes into practice. I marched up the road to this unpainted miner's cabin. I knocked on the door. It came open as if it were coming off the hinges. And there stood the largest woman I'd ever seen. She was over six feet tall. She filled that doorway. She said, "Come in, you goddamn son of a bitch; I've been looking for you."

I decided to stay on the porch. She said, "You kept little Ruthie in at recess. Little Ruthie is an orphant, and ain't nobody going to mistreat little Ruthie."

I said, "Little Ruthie is going to stay in if she breaks the rules." She'd just been chewing gum, but that was the rule then.

She said, "I'd rather see little Ruthie dead and in her coffin than coming back to school to you. She ain't coming no more."

"Then you'll go to jail," I said.

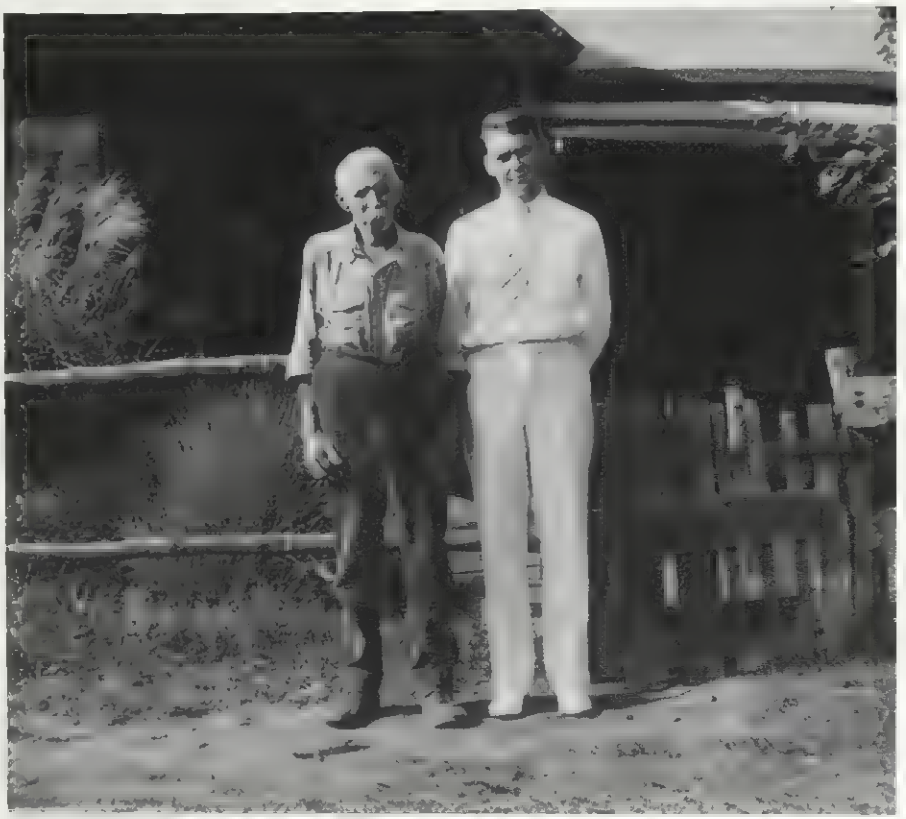
She said, "I've got a new ax I'm saving to put your head on the railroad track and chop it off."

From the dark interior of the cabin, Ruthie's aunt said, "They don't do nothing but send Rock Creek trash down here to teach school anyway." I lived in east Erwin, next to Rock Creek. That got my dander up.

I said, "Young lady, shut your mouth. Ruthie is not your child, and this is not your business." I turned to the grandmother and told her she'd better have Ruthie in school the next day or I'd call the law. I told her I knew she couldn't afford to pay a fine, that she was lucky to have food on the table. And I marched off. Ruthie was back in school the next morning.

At Christmas time, the children wanted to draw names and exchange presents. They decided they would each spend a dime at the five and ten cent store. Ruthie's grandmother wrote me a note and said that Ruthie didn't have a dime and asked if she could borrow one. She said she'd pay me on payday. Well, payday never came, but that was all right. I knew some of the children didn't have a dime, so I bought some presents and stuck them back and slipped them quietly to those children who couldn't buy a present to exchange. I got several rolls of red, white and green crepe paper, and we cut it in strips and crimped it and hung it from the ceiling. It looked like a circus. I got a little tree and we decorated it, and they put their presents around it. We had quite a Christmas party.

There was a little boy in my class named Donny and his little sister named Lillie. I got a call one morning to rush down to their home because Donny and Lillie were dying. (In a one-teacher com-



Howze and "Uncle" John White in front of the boarding house in Bumpass Cove, 1932. *Photo courtesy of Tom Howze*

munity they thought the teacher could do anything.) So I rushed down there. Donny died shortly after I got there. Lillie lay in a bed in the same room. Dr. Willis arrived. He certified that Donny was dead and said Lillie's throat was paralyzed. She couldn't swallow or breathe. The mother was ill, too. The father said he thought it might be something they had eaten, but he didn't know what it was. The doctor said he couldn't save Lillie, but he could save the mother if she went to the hospital. She agreed to go if I'd stay with her husband and children. I called the school superintendent and told him I was going to stay with the family. The students wouldn't come to school anyway because they were afraid Donny and Lillie had died of something contagious. A county health man came and found that they had eaten some beans that weren't properly canned and had died of botulism.

After I'd been there two years, I was offered a promotion to a five-teacher school. The people in Bumpass Cove came to me and said they were going to tell the superintendent that they wanted to keep me. I said, "My father is an invalid, and I need to be at home to help my family." So they went to the superintendent and encouraged him to promote me.

There is something, a connection, between all of us from the school. I've moved in and out of this area over the last 60 years, but the students always seem to know when I'm back, and they call.

About three or four years ago I got a call from a woman who said she was Dennis's daughter. She said Dennis had talked about me a lot over the years. Now he was sick and wanted to see me. So I went to see him. I said, "You know, Dennis, you and I are getting old."

He said, "Don't say I'm as old as you are. You taught me in school."

I said, "Yes, but I was 19 and you were 16, Dennis." About three weeks later, his daughter called to say that Dennis had died. I went to the funeral to pay my respects.

Once I was at a grocery store, and a scrawny fellow with no front teeth came up to me. He said, "Mithter Howthe, do you know me?"

I said, "Yes, I taught you in the first and second grades."

He said, "How did you remember?"

I said, "You didn't have any front teeth then either."

He said, "Oh, Mithter Howthe."

Bumpass Cove School went out of operation in the early 60s. Betty Keever, who is now retired in Erwin, was the last teacher. Enrollment dropped; the mines never picked up again, and the people had to move out and do something else. The schoolhouse caught fire and burned down. The boarding house burned. The road has been closed across the creek, so I'm unable to get over there to see what it looks like now. The cove has been contaminated and polluted [a now-closed toxic waste dump, subject of much controversy in the 1970s].

About three years ago, Jim Brooks [of the *Johnson City Press*] wanted to interview me. I mentioned Bumpass Cove in the article and told about the smallpox vaccinations. A few days later someone called and said, "I'm one of those younguns that jumped out the window in Bumpass Cove." Her name was Violet Starnes [Cole], and she and her cousin Mary [Starnes Street] wanted to have a Bumpass Cove reunion. We got together and wrote to everyone we could locate. Sixty-one people came, and we had a wonderful time.

Violet went to the cove and picked up stones. She wrapped each one in red tissue paper and tied a bow on it and put a little poem through it. She gave everyone at the reunion a little piece of Bumpass Cove.

We had another reunion this past year, our 60th. And we'll have another one next year, the last Saturday in May. I'm very proud of these people. They're a credit to anybody, and I'm proud to have taught them.

Tom Howze, who lives in Jonesborough, Tenn., is a storyteller. He is working on his autobiography. This memoir is taken from an interview with Laurene Scalf.

Sestina for Second Semester

for "Elf"

An unmarked semester roll
lies waiting to accuse the missing —
the shot up, the knocked up, sent up
state to be locked away. Memories
run the temporal courses
recalling endless rolls of nameless faces.

Tragic, struggling, battered faces
drift on and off the roll.
Numbered, they take prison courses
in reading, filling in the missing
parts — home holds no memories
but fists and failure — locked up.

Memories of the called up —
proud, stern, baby faces
hide sad, kind memories,
write home, bark roll
counts, letters stopped — missing —
no more obstacles courses.

Bright eyes aced their courses
performed on cue, got scholarships up
north, sailed through, never missing
a beat or question, open faces
hiding nothing, topping the roll
in the class of bright memories.

Astigmatic, fuzzy-edged memories —
mediocre, marginal work in courses
suffered, unnoticed but on roll —
restless, stifling yawns, look up
blandly, imagination unfired — faces
hiding talent — inspiration missing.

Prom queens suspiciously missing —
glorious but tainted memories —
ever jealous smirking faces —
shoddy homebound study courses,
dirty diapers piling up —
dropped quietly from roll.

The new roll accuses the missing,
Their courses forgotten, only memories
piling up with ungraded papers of
nameless faces.

— A. Jane Hicks

Jane Hicks teaches gifted elementary pupils in East Tennessee. She has published in ***Now and Then*** *and* ***Sow's Ear****.*

HERITAGE HOUR

by Kate Long

Nineteen-sixty-three was West Virginia's hundredth birthday. Our teachers doused us with state history till it ran out our ears. George Washington surveyed West Virginia before it was a state. West Virginia broke off from Virginia and fought with the North in the Civil War. Union Carbide started in Charleston. Pearl Buck was born in Pocahontas County. Morgan Morgan settled Morgantown. Upshur County was settled by two men who lived in a hollow tree.

As long as I can remember, the old men at the store had taught me other state history. Root hog or die and so forth. I knew that, when Grandpop was a coal miner, a black man pulled him through a hole in a rock slide, right before the roof caved in. I knew that Central lived in a tent all winter after the coal company threw the union families out. I knew the company had tricked his dad into coming to West Virginia in the first place. The day he got off the boat from Romania, a guy cornered him at Immigration and promised him a good home and job. Three days later, they were in the wild mountains with no English and no cash.

When Central's dad tried to leave, the company said he owed the train fare. He tried to work it off, but they kept charging him for other stuff. A year later, after he signed a union card, company thugs threw the family out, tossed their stuff off the porch of the company house. Half of it broke when it hit the ground. Dozens of families got the same heave-ho. "And every one of those thugs was a Republican," Grandpop said.

None of that was in my schoolbooks. Grandpop said they left it out because they didn't want children knowing their own history. He wasn't sure who "they" were, but he was damn sure they were Republicans.

The winter Central's family got thrown out, they lived in a tent. So did a bunch of other union families, all along the creek. "The company set up a machine gun on the hillside, pointed right at us," he said. His dad sniped at the thugs from the hills with his rifle. Central kicked a thug in the leg once, and the guy threw him in the mud.

Fifteen miles downriver, Grandpop and his dad watched armed trains roll by their house, stuffed with immigrants, heading for the mines where Central's dad got thrown out. "Poor devils, didn't even know they were strikebreakers," Grandpop said.

He and Central were both 11 years old that year, same as I am now.

Once Central saw Mother Jones, standing on a stump, hollering, "Pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living." He remembered that all those years.

I told Mrs. Miller, my fourth grade teacher, about the machine gun and thugs. She said, "Why, I never heard of such a thing," as if nothing could possibly be true unless she knew about it.

In honor of West Virginia's hundredth birthday, she said we'd tell stories about our heritage every Thursday morning. She spelled out HERITAGE on the bulletin board in red paper letters. We'd draw pictures of it, she said.

During my first Heritage Hour, I told Sam Angotti's logging camp stories. Sam was a store regular. His family had arrived from Italy when he was 12, and he started work for a lumber company when he was 13. The logging camps were so cold on winter nights, he said, his overalls stood up by themselves next to his bunk, caked with ice. "Put them on that way the next morning, too," he said.

I stared holes in the class and said, "Who'd do that now?" the way Sam asked me. "Who'd work like that now?" I got no takers.

"Sam worked for a dollar a day, wrassling big logs down to the river with two mules named Ruth and Ben. One day a log slid down so fast, it dragged Ruth and Ben into the water and drowned them. Sam drew down his pay and hopped a train into town. He never went back. He worked for the railroad instead, laying track beside the New River."

Mrs. Miller liked that story. She also liked stories about people helping each other during the Great Depression. But tales about mine disasters or gun thugs made her antsy. Nothing like that happened in Ohio while she was growing up, she said, and she couldn't get used to it.

Mrs. Miller's pencil started tapping as soon as I started telling about the Monongah mine blowing up. It killed more than 300 men. Harold Schraft's uncle was inside. I told how Harold stood crying in the night, four years old, watching smoke and fire belch out of the shaft, tall dark forms milling around him, screaming and praying.

"And forever after," I said, "when anyone talked about hellfire and torment down below, Harold always thought of the Monongah Mine."

Mrs. Miller looked at her watch. "When Harold was 15," I said, "he went in the mines for $10 a day and thought it was good money. Once he crawled a mile

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May Day Substitute

I sit at the front
of the class for the absent
art teacher. I have taken lessons
in hard rooms like these, sitting in
the back with a penchant for passing
words off cue and daydreaming
mandrakes in mushrooming clouds.

I am invisible now
in the face of a posse of preteens
spreading graffiti in random colors
across oversized sheets. A girl boasts
about leathers her sister boosted
in the Compton loot; a boy whispers
he doesn't understand
why we burn our own.

I do not speak
but try to think Maypoles
ribboned with dancing children,
woodruffs blooming past spring;
instead, I see
Washington, heated in '68, where I bore
a son, sought evening shade when even
the sky seemed to bleed. I wait
for news from Telegraph
that he has kept quiet in Berkeley.

And I know
I've thrown my own
words to walls, rocks
through windows; I have run
with the roll of canisters in the street,
I believed
once naming peace.

But I never believed
I would follow instructions
from the Board of Education to keep
these words to myself, move on
past the second day marker of spoil
and sports raising Reebok trophies,
declaring at the yellow police line
that losers are winners, that the last
are first. I never believed
that if you can't get justice,
you can get even.

— Andrena Zawinski

Andrena Zawinski teaches in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Western Pennsylvania Writers Project's Young Writers Institute at the University of Pittsburgh. Her poems have appeared in ***Slant, Black Buzzard Review, Eclectic Literary Forum, Painted Hills Review*** *and others. Contest awards include* ***Oxalis Writing Olympics, In Pittsburgh,*** *and* ***Taproot Literary Review.***

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in the dark, through icy water in a 30-inch shaft. The roof'd caved in on two guys, and he was crawling to get help. Rats ran over top of him."

Mrs. Miller rang the bell for recess early, before I could tell how Harold crawled back in with the rescue team. While everyone got their coats, Mrs. Miller cornered me and told me those kind of stories weren't heritage. Blood rushed to my head. "Why not?" I asked.

"Heritage is something you're proud of," she said.

"What d'ya mean?" I yelled after her as she walked away. She didn't answer.

After recess, she told the class that "It's sad such things had to happen, but the mines are much safer today." And she wrote Mom a note that said she was worried about the violent content of the stories I told in school.

I told Grandpop and his buddies what Mrs. Miller said. They taught me the words to "Which Side Are You On," so I could sing it during the next Heritage Hour. I got as far as "They say in Harlan County, there is no neutral there. You'll either be a union man or a thug —" Mrs. Miller said, "Thank you, Delphine," and called on the next kid.

I didn't tell any more heritage. It was only a few weeks till school let out.

Kate Long lives and writes in Charleston, W. Va. "Heritage Hour" is excerpted from ***Ordinaries,*** *a novel in progress.*

Sing What You Know

An Interview with Thad Beach

by Ted Olson

"Write what you know" has long been the dictum handed down to students. Thad Beach, a teacher and musician, urges students also to sing what they know. He has conducted over 100 workshops in public schools in the Carolinas and in Kansas and Iowa, helping students to write songs inspired by their families' oral histories. Beach grew up near Cincinnati, Ohio, and was educated at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. Ted Olson talks with Beach about his purpose and process.

How did you come up with the ideas that shape your "Songsmith" workshops?

I knew from the start that I wanted to tie it in with local history. Some of my first workshops involved the kids just listening to stories I would tell and excerpts I would read from Appalachian literature. But once we started talking, I would say to myself, "Why go to the books first? Why not go to the people, go to the kids, the parents, the grandparents?" So I began to use more interviews and folklore.

What is the primary educational goal of your workshops?

My main goal is to instill in the kids that taking a word and finding rhymes and just playing with the language and the different sounds can be fun. Language arts skills, more than anything else, are the foundation of my curriculum.

Describe the procedure you follow for a typical workshop.

I've already sent the school a packet for a pre-residency activity in which the students listen to the songs on the *Echoes of Avery* tape and brainstorm ideas about topics for a song. So by the time I walk into a class on Monday, the kids already have a good idea of what we will be doing. Then we'll start to work on language arts skills by taking words apart, using alliteration and rhyme, and completing some fill-in-the-blank songs.

On Tuesday we'll talk about topics of local history that we might write songs about. When you say one topic and there's a buzz and everybody starts talking to each other, it's easy to tell the kids want to write about it.

By Wednesday, we've chosen our topic. The kids will take a bunch of questions home on Wednesday and interview their parents or grandparents. We'll have a question that asks, "Do you know a story about this topic? And if you do, could you please write it on the back?" And sometimes we get interesting stories written on the back of the papers — not always about the topic.

On Thursday we go over the information the kids have obtained, and we make an outline. Thursday and Friday we work on our outline and get the verses written. I play a bunch of traditional melodies — old fiddle tunes and ballads — and we find one that fits the mood of the song. Usually by midday on Friday, we get the song finished up. We might record the finished song on a tape recorder or video tape. Also, we write down the words on a lyric sheet, and the kids draw pictures on the sheet to go along with the lyrics.

Which age groups are in general most receptive to the workshops?

I've adapted the program for all ages, but I feel the best target group for it is fourth grade through eighth grade. A part of the fourth grade curriculum in North Carolina is North Carolina history, so my program fits right in there.

I've had some really interesting experiences in high schools with the writing of historical ballads. Some students in McDowell County [N.C.] wanted to write about the Marion Strike of '29, when the National Guard was called into Marion during the textile mill strike. It was a topic that people in that community still feel strongly about. And in a community that didn't look too kindly on unions, those students wrote a real good song trying to show both sides of the story.

Another experience involved some secondary students at Nantahala School, a little K-to-12 school tucked back in a corner of Macon County near the Nantahala Gorge. The older kids there wrote a song called "The Nantahala Dam" that told about people being displaced from their homes when the dam was built. One of the students got a questionnaire back from someone who described sitting in the schoolhouse as a child and watching the dam workers dig up relatives in the cemetery and move their graves up onto the top of the hill.

How do you teach music composition?

A question on the questionnaire is "What songs do you remember from your childhood?' Often I put a list of those songs on the board and sometimes we'll use the melody of one of those songs.

With the older grades I start by demonstrating some traditional tunes. Often we'll use a traditional melody for the

verse, but we'll do some music composition and create our own chorus. Our songs become an interesting mixture then of the old and the new.

How do you help students who fear the writing process?

Sometimes children who have problems writing can verbalize. I'll say, "Say it as if you were talking to your friends," and I write [what they say] on the board. And sometimes it's just the perfect thing.

What differences do you notice in the lives of mountain children and the lives of urban children?

When I'm talking to a class in the mountains, I might ask: "How many people can call up their grandpartents without it being a long distance call?" Almost everybody in the class raises their hands. But I did some work down in Aiken, South Carolina, right near the Savannah Nuclear Plant. People come there from all over the country and work a few years at the plant and then move on. I asked the same question there, and nobody in the class was born anywhere near Aiken, nobody had local roots.

What part does the regular class teacher play in your workshops?

Sometimes the teachers think, "Well, this is my chance to go to the teachers' lounge; this is an hour off." If this happens, my workshops won't work as well. It's always better if I can work with teachers who are into local history or, more important, into creative writing. After all, teachers already know which kids have a hard time writing. Ideally they will walk around the room and help them a bit. And maybe if the teachers know an easier way to make a connection with the kids, they'll offer their advice, too.

What types of funding do you receive?

Usually the program will put up half the money and the school or local arts council will fund the rest. I've worked a lot in the Mountain Arts Program in western North Carolina, which is funded by various local arts councils and also by grass-roots money from the North Carolina Arts Council (which I believe gets part of its funding from the National Endowment for the Arts). I've also worked in the South Carolina Arts in Education Program, which is funded in a similar way. Out in Kansas, a lot of local funding supports my residencies, and some of the funding comes from local industries.

How do your workshops contribute to Appalachian education?

They encourage communication between the generations. The Appalachia of today and that of 50 years ago — when kids' grandparents were young — are quite different. I hope that my workshops help kids find pride in their past and in their heritage, pride in the things their parents and grandparents have done. I hope that my workshops help kids understand the region they call home.

Ted Olson is a Ph.D. candidate in English and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. His prize-winning essay on Cherokee stickball appears in the 1993 issue of the ***Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association.*** *He would like to thank Theresa Buckley for her help in obtaining this interview.*

Fifth Grade Poetry Class

I squat beside him, and with his gnawed pencil
in my hand, urge, *Tell me what your hand looks like.*
All morning, while other kids compared clouds
to cotton, snow to feathers, this boy,
so eager he couldn't stay seated, shouted out,
A wet dog smells like liver* and *Ice burns
***like a piece of sun.* Even the teacher looked up,**
amazed, at this boy who's spent two years
in 5th grade, the kid who can't write,
who needs special help on every assignment.
Now, he draws his hand close, fingers folded under,
then extends them, grinning, as he says,
It's an old woman's wrinkled face, Five men
***in a field, Five roads to nowhere.* Metaphors spill**
so fast the pencil fumbles, words blur,
I lose letters, lines tumble clumsily off the page.
It's like the time I took a horse
outside the riding school's fenced-in arena,
and rode off, for the first time, alone.
It was April in the Blue Ridge, and the horse,
released to the open fields, gathered speed
as naturally as the earth drew strength from the sun.
Behind me, the gray barn, where all winter
I'd trudged the muddy ring, grew smaller,
until it stood like a door that blocked off
another world, leaving me free on the outside,
giddy and breathless, vowing I'd never turn back.

— Debra Conner

Debra Conner's poetry collection, "Building a House for Walt Whitman," won first place in the 1992 West Virginia Writers' Contest. She teaches at West Virginia University-Parkersburg and serves as a writer-in-the-schools for Artsbridge and the Ohio Arts Council.

SERVICE IN THE VALLEY

The Bonner Scholars Program

Mildred Fizer quit school when she was 15 years old. She doesn't regret it. "I just didn't fit into the mold of traditional education," she says. She enrolled in the General Equivalency Degree program and passed the test with the highest score among that year's candidates at the Princeton Learning Center in Princeton, W. Va.

She later was accepted by Concord College in Athens, W. Va. Fizer chose Concord because the Bonner Scholars Program there would permit her to return to the Princeton Learning Center to tutor other G.E.D. candidates.

The desire to give something back to the community is the basis of the Bonner Scholars Program.Founded in 1990 by the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation in Princeton, N.J., the program requires that recipients give 10 hours of community service each week during the school year and 240 hours of service in the summer.

The program began at Berea College in Kentucky, where 40 students were selected and supported, and has now spread to 22 colleges, most of which are in the southern Appalachian and Piedmont area. They include, among others, Berry College in Georgia; Carson-Newman College in Tennessee; Davidson College, Mars Hill College and Guilford College in North Carolina; Emory and Henry College and Ferrum College in Virginia; and West Virginia Wesleyan College.

Candidates must graduate in the top 40 percent of their high school class and must demonstrate significant responsibility at home, in the community and at church or school. Consideration is given to ways low-income students participate: contributing to family income, for instance, or caring for younger siblings or parents or grandparents. Once accepted, Bonner Scholars must maintain a 3.0 grade average.

The program pays a significant portion of the students' expenses, making college possible for students for whom it would be otherwise out of reach. The annual scholarship is $3,700 per student, with an allotment of $1,500 annually for books, travel and personal expenses; a $1,000 voucher after completion of the summer service requirement; up to $400 stipend for summer service internship; and a $1,400 award upon graduation to reduce student loans.

Aside from individual volunteer work, the scholars work as a team in the community. One hundred dollars per scholar is placed in a Community Service Fund to be allocated annually by the scholars with the aid of the program's coordinator at each institution.

Women seem more responsive than men to a program centered on community service. Despite efforts to recruit more men, the program in 1991 was 67 percent female. The program also seeks racial balance among the scholars chosen.

To Mildred Fizer, the male-female imbalance was less glaring than the alienation she felt as holder of a G.E.D. rather than the high school diploma the other scholars had. "When I finally met my peers at the orientation, I realized that they truly wanted to help others," she writes. "But I also felt that they adhered strongly to myths about high school dropouts and G.E.D. students. On their first day of tutoring they held their purses and wallets close and watched everyone from the corner of their eyes."

After three months, however, Fizer wrote: "I, too, have learned that my stereotypes were inaccurate. I was worried that the Bonner Scholars would approach the Center with a superior attitude and would cause more harm than good. I was wrong. The Bonner Scholars have proved to be friends and fellow learners, both to the students at the Center and to myself."

Bonner Scholars are under no specific financial or work obligation upon graduation, but it is hoped that the required volunteer work will foster a sense of belonging which will keep the scholars in the area. "The state is suffering from a loss of its young people," says Bob Henry Baber, Director of the Bonner Scholars Program at Concord College. "Those are the very people we need to show leadership and help solve our social problems." People like Mildred Fizer, the non-traditional learner who champions the traditional Appalachian value of helping others to help themselves.

— Laurene Scalf

Bonner Scholar Mildred Fizer tutors a G.E.D. student.

Eliot Wigginton

A Meditation

by Guy L. Osborne

As readers, writers and educators with a deep interest and love of Appalachia, what are we to do with Eliot Wigginton, with our feelings and thoughts about this man and his work?

He is currently serving time in the Rabun County (Ga.) jail after pleading guilty to a charge of child sexual abuse which he had earlier vehemently denied. Wigginton allegedly fondled a boy as he put him to bed during a visit to his house by two children who were part of an overnight Foxfire-related trip.

A statement released by the Foxfire Fund expresses shock and sadness over the incident, and a commitment to carry on the important work Wigginton had begun. The statement, in part, reads, "It is exceptionally difficult for us to reconcile the visible accomplishments of Mr. Wigginton in the classroom with the hidden wrongdoing he has now admitted. Our hearts go out to all of those who have been affected by this tragedy. Obviously, Mr. Wigginton's actions. . . require his total separation from the work of the Foxfire Fund. Despite (his) personal problems, he developed and demonstrated successful techniques for classroom teaching (which) have been passed on to hundreds of other teachers. . . . Throughout his career, Mr. Eliot Wigginton has made tremendous contributions to education in our country. Our fervent hope is that he and his family will ultimately recover from this tragedy."

This is a good statement. All of us with connections to Appalachian writing, scholarship and education need to let its points sink in.

First, we need to acknowledge our confusion. Eliot Wigginton is the world's most unlikely child molester. His good deeds on behalf of children have advanced their welfare. His benign personal appearance (he reminds me of "Ernie" from the "My Three Sons" TV show) is incompatible with any image of a menacing child molester. Besides, he told us he didn't do it.

Out of our confusion, we need to admit that a great wrong has been committed. To be sure, child sexual abuse can be understood in psychiatric terms as a sickness rooted deep beyond human will power or even consciousness. But there is a little boy with a face and a name and a family and now first-hand experience as a victim. And there is the field of Appalachian Studies, which has experienced in this event perhaps its greatest betrayal. Real damage has been done. Eliot Wigginton did it. We have good reason to feel sick and angry beyond words.

And yet, it is also true he did more good for children and Appalachian Studies through his imaginative and engaging Foxfire work than most of the rest of us put together have done or will do in our collective lifetimes. This doesn't diminish the damage done and certainly not his culpability. But it is an important reality to acknowledge.

Where do we go from here? There are some things of value we can gain from this awful time. Basically, I think it's time for Appalachian Studies to grow up.

We have good reason to feel sick and angry beyond words.

One way we can grow up is by being less doctrinaire in our ideology. Wigginton's offense reminds us that the human psyche and soul are complicated. Our human natures and individual flaws defy a simplistic class-is-everything sociological paradigm. Freud and Calvin are as relevant in Appalachian Studies as Dewey and Marx.

Appalachian Studies also can grow up by being less judgmental. After Wigginton, it will be harder to derive feelings of moral superiority and self-esteem by dividing up the world into the bad guys such as coal operators and politicians (*them*) versus the good guys such as community activists and Appalachian scholars and educators (*us*). It is time to admit the common humanity of us all. We can learn to work for reconciliation rather than settle for moral posturing. Gandhi took this approach without losing any of his integrity or outrage over social injustice. So can we.

As for Eliot Wigginton, we can love the man and hate what he did, realizing that few of us can match his brilliance but all of us are capable of sins as bad or worse than his. We can envision the Foxfire movement not only surviving but learning a hard lesson from this experience and being better for it. And with a sufficient grace we all need, we can extend our hope to Eliot Wigginton, that in time his creative mind and caring spirit will find new and productive ways of expression.

Denise Giardina vividly captured this way of looking at the world in the conversation between Carrie and Albion in her novel, *Storming Heaven.*

" 'Do you think that man is in Hell?' I asked Albion, who perched on the banister.

" 'I reckon I aint told you. I'm a No Heller.'

" 'A what?'

" 'A No Heller. Hit's a kind of Hardshell Baptist. The Hardshells, you know, they believe God has it all set out who will be saved and who wont. Some go to Heaven, some to Hell, and they aint nothing a body can do about it. Me, I'm a No Heller. That's why I left Knott County, because they didnt want to hear the No Hell preached. They reckoned they was bound for glory and they didnt want to hear no sinners coming with them.'

" 'You mean you dont believe in Hell?' I was shocked. 'What about the bad people?'

" 'Who is the bad people? Hit's us, Carrie. I believe in the Fall. I believe in the first sin, that it taints all of us.'

" 'What about the man that kilt his baby? You and me wouldnt do that.'

" 'Who's to say what we wouldnt do? We aint lived our lives yet.' "

Larry Osborne is the Dean of Academic Special Programs and Chair of Appalachian Studies at Carson Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn. He is the former head of the psychology department there.

Missing the Point

Newbery Awards, Literary Tourism and God in the Potato Salad in New Children's Literature of Appalachia

Roberta Herrin

In the last 10 years there has been a proliferation of Appalachian children's books, many of them excellent works of literature which throw light on life in Appalachia. Unfortunately, those that are receiving the most national attention are not the finest works available in the region.

Since the spring 1987 issue of *Now and Then* focusing on Appalachian Childhood in which I reviewed the literature ("Appalachian Books for All Children"), more than 50 new Appalachian children's books have appeared, many written by authors new to the scene since 1982 — Cynthia Rylant, George Ella Lyon, Jenny Davis and Gloria Houston, just to mention a few.

Even more notable, however, is the fact that the two most recent Newbery awards went to Appalachian books: Cynthia Rylant's *Missing May* in 1993 and Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's *Shiloh* in 1992, both set in West Virginia. Rylant also won *Boston Globe-Horn Book* awards in 1992 for *Missing May* and in 1991 for *Appalachia: the Voices of Sleeping Birds*.

I wonder what these awards spell for Appalachian children's literature? They will certainly bring it visibility. Awards are powerful things, as witness the 1992 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for drama — Robert Schenkkan's *The Kentucky Cycle*, which consists of nine one-act plays covering the 200-year history of three Kentucky families. In the July 1992 issue of *Ace Magazine*, seven writers articulate cogent analyses of the play and the consequences of its having won a Pulitzer. George Ella Lyon calls it a "dumbshow of stereotypes"—"the same weary plod through outraged pity, preconceived notions, self-righteous reductionism and psychosocial projection that has been the mark of literary tourism for so long." She echoes Schenkkan's own startled queries when he first drove through Kentucky: "What had happened here? How could this be?" Lyon and others voice concern for the far-reaching implications of this Pulitzer. Says Fred Johnson, "What Robert Schenkkan thinks his work represents is irrelevant. The economics of culture will now go to work. With the Pulitzer, the play will take on a powerful cultural life of its own."

When I heard that Rylant's *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds* (Harcourt 1991) had won a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* award for non-fiction, my own response was, "How could this be?" In the first place, *Appalachia* is not a book written with children in mind. *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* calls it "a running narrative description of the dogs, people, houses, seasons, and lifestyles of Appalachia," evocative of James Agee. The book purports to convey a sense of Appalachia rather than to tell a story. Nor is it painstakingly crafted as one would expect an award-winner to be. In an interview for the *Ohio Reading Teacher* (Fall 1991), Rylant told Teressa Julian-Goebel, "I just grabbed a yellow legal pad and a pen. I didn't know what I was going to write. Then I read the first paragraph about Appalachia. I finished the book in a matter of two or three hours; it was only one draft."

In this same interview, Rylant tells us that *Appalachia* has replaced*Waiting to Waltz* (Bradbury 1984) as the favorite of her books: With this book, she says, "I have come closest to achieving that beauty of language, the soft, subtle, profoundly beautiful sound of language." What Rylant *thinks* her work represents, to quote Fred Johnson, "is irrelevant." It will not be remembered for its "profoundly beautiful" language but because it satisfies the American adult's fondness for a particular mythical Appalachia, replete with illustrator Barry Moser's wonderful hound dogs. By virtue of their awards, *Appalachia* and *Missing May* (Orchard 1992) will now take on powerful cultural lives of their own.

Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds is the sort of book that adults will place on bedside tables in guest rooms so that overnight visitors can remark, "How quaint." Though its plot is essentially another *When I Was Young in the Mountains* (Dutton 1982), it doesn't have the same story appeal or the child's perspective. It is an adult's indulgence in nostalgic fantasy. When the book was read to an audience at ETSU, Dr. Jack Higgs commented from the back of the room, "That's not literature. That's amateur sociology!"

Though *Missing May* is an altogether different kind of story, and though it has won the highest award given for children's literature, it too strikes me as adult nostalgic fantasy. *Missing May* is the story of 12-year-old Summer, an orphan who lives with Uncle Ob and Aunt May in a rusty trailer in West Virginia. When May dies, Summer and Ob, with the help of Summer's friend Cletus, struggle with their loss, but find a way to hold on to May's spirit. There is much to praise about the book: Ilene Cooper (Booklist, February 15, 1992) argues that "Rylant makes us aware of the possibilities of life, even in the midst of tragedy. There is a freshness here that feels like a cool breeze."

Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds is the sort of book that adults will place on bedside tables in guest rooms so that overnight visitors can remark, "How quaint."

But there are also facets of the book that I object to in a Newbery award winner. The opening paragraph is not a "cool breeze" but an Appalachian

apologist's explanation for why people keep old cars in their yards:

> When May died, Ob came back to the trailer, got out of his good suit and into his regular clothes, then went and sat in the Chevy for the rest of the night. That old car had been parked out by the doghouse for as long as I could remember, and the weeds had grown up all around it so you didn't even notice it unless you looked, and for years I couldn't understand why Ob didn't just get rid of the awful thing. Until I saw him sitting in it after the funeral. Then I knew that even though nobody in the world figured that old car had any good purpose, Ob knew there was some real reason to let it sit. And when May died, he figured out what it was.

Art demands that during the course of the novel the reader be satisfied as to the significance of this car, but the Chevy never figures in the story. Did the reviewers overlook or dismiss this artistic rule because the Appalachian cultural phenomenon of old cars in front yards has now been explained? Did the reviewers simply overlook passages such as the following that are in dire need of editing?

> May always said that once she got with Ob, her mommy and daddy could rest easy, and they finally flew off to that big church picnic in the sky. She said her daddy would be cleaning God out of his [sic] potato salad.

This passage alone provided sufficient cause for a local elementary teacher to tell me she would avoid using *Missing May* with her students. But there are other problems, too. Summer, the main character, is a too-wise adult/child glibly mouthing situation-comedy sentiments. The book dismisses in 89 superficial pages the complexity of grief. It does not move me to tears as the reviewers promised. Instead, as I read the book, I wish for real children—not quaint, diffident, little adults who live in rusty trailers and four-room shacks but nevertheless know about surrealism and Renaissance men and can make sophisticated puns: "Rent-a-Seance Man."

It is no accident that in the last two years this country's most prestigious literary awards have gone to works which do nothing to educate readers to Appalachia's history.

The New York Times Book Review on October 18, 1992, says that *Missing May* presents an "out-at-the-elbows Appalachia world," where "there are no soft pink roses. No yellow-flowered hats. And no robins." Sound familiar? In short, this year's Newbery Award has gone to yet another romantic presentation of the culture of poverty.

Likewise, the 1992 Newbery Award winner, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's *Shiloh* (Atheneum 1991), set in present-day West Virginia, depicts a family so poverty stricken that they can't afford to feed an abused, starved beagle named Shiloh. Though the father is a postal worker, the family has so little money for food that Marty, the main character, starves himself to feed the dog. Like *Missing May*, *Shiloh* has many fine qualities, not the least of which is that Marty is a real little boy totally in love with a real dog, which makes for an excellent dog story. Unfortunately, the good qualities of *Missing May* and *Shiloh* are obscured by a political and sociologi-

RECOMMENDED TITLES
Recent Appalachian Children's Books

Besides titles receiving positive mention in her review, Roberta Herrin recommends the following recently published children's books:

Cannon, Bettie. *A Bellsong for Sarah Raines*. Scribner, 1987.

Carson, Jo. *You Hold Me and I'll Hold You*. Illustrated by Annie Cannon, Orchard, 1992.

Green, Connie Jordan. *Emmy*. McElderry, 1992.

Haley, Gail E. *Mountain Jack Tales*. Dutton, 1992.

Hooks, William H. *The Three Little Pigs and the Fox*. Illustrated by S. D. Schindler, Macmillan, 1989.

Houston, Gloria. *But No Candy*. Illustrated by Lloyd Bloom, Philomel, 1992.

_____. *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree*. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney, Dial, 1988.

Lawlor, Laurie. *Daniel Boone*. Illustrated by Bert Dodson, Whitman, 1989.

Levinson, Nancy Smiler. *Clara and the Bookwagon*. Illustrated by Carolyn Croll, Harper, 1988.

Lyon, George Ella. *Red Rover*. Orchard, 1989.

____. *Cecil's Story*. Illustrated by Peter Catalanotto, Orchard, 1991.

_____. *Come a Tide*. Illustrated by Stephen Gammell, Orchard, 1990.

_____. *Who Came Down That Road?* Illustrated by Peter Catalanotto, Orchard, 1992.

Miller, Jim Wayne. *Newfound*. Orchard, 1989.

Milnes, Gerald. *Granny Will Your Dog Bite and Other Mountain Rhymes*. Illustrated by Kimberly Bulcken Root, Knopf, 1990.

Ray, Deborah Kogan. *My Dog, Trip*. Holiday House, 1987.

Rappaport, Doreen. *Trouble at the Mines*. Illustrated by Joan Sandin, Crowell, 1987.

Reeder, Carolyn. *Grandpa's Mountain*. Macmillan, 1991.

Smucker, Anna Egan. *No Star Nights*. Illustrated by Steve Johnson, Knopf, 1989.

White, Ruth. *Sweet Creek Holler*. Farrar, 1988.

Yep, Laurence. *The Star Fisher*. Morrow, 1991.

cal self consciousness that quietly reminds us, "You are reading *romantic myth.*"

We must be careful in children's literature — be it mainstream, Appalachian, Southwestern, Midwestern, whatever — to present good literature, *not* amateur sociology or outdated romanticism. Unfortunately, the recent awards will probably produce an explosion of books whose regional quaintness is praised while dozens of good books with good stories lie unnoticed, and dozens of books that ought to be written never are.

For example, among the 50 or so Appalachian children's books published since 1987, there is still little biography and little historical fiction beyond the 18th and 19th centuries. I can find no children's book which addresses the role of settlement schools in Appalachia; no books detailing the influence of the Tennessee Valley Authority or the Appalachian Regional Commission; *still* no books on Appalachian athletes, doctors, dancers, artists, musicians — the list goes on. One of the greatest omissions is that there is no story of Myles Horton and the Highlander Center. This is a piece of the region's history that children need to know.

It is no accident that in the last two years this country's most prestigious literary awards have gone to works which do nothing to educate readers about Appalachia's history. It is no accident that writers who depict a mainstream Appalachia or experiment with new artistic forms (i.e. Jo Carson's play, *The Bear Facts*) are not rewarded. America is deeply in love with its myth of Appalachia. Are these awards (consciously or otherwise) motivated to keep that myth alive? Is the notion of Appalachia as a sort of American Brigadoon, with hidden pockets of mountain communities that speak quaint Elizabethan English, so attractive that we will sacrifice to it the very inventiveness and honesty that impel great literature?

I can't answer these questions. I do know Rylant herself has far more deserving books than *Missing May* and *Appalachia. Waiting to Waltz* and Rylant's own autobiography, *But I'll Be Back Again* (Orchard 1989), offer the most honest portrayals of growing up in the region that you'll find anywhere. If you want to read a book which handles Appalachia's language — its "voices" — with a fine ear, read Jo Carson's *Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet* (Orchard 1989). If you are looking for vital American issues (venereal disease, strip mining, VISTA, single parenthood) played out in an Appalachian setting, read Jenny Davis' *Good-Bye and Keep Cold* (Orchard/Watts 1987). If you want a story of families struggling with mental depression, drugs, old age and youth — without the sociological didacticism — read Sue Ellen Bridgers' *Permanent Connections* (Harper 1987). If you want a beautiful book, whose illustrations rival Barry Moser's, read Jeff Daniel Marion's *Hello Crow* (Orchard 1992).

If we expect our youth (and the American public) to be educated about the region, we need more books like Connie Jordan Green's *The War at Home* (McElderry 1989), which tackles a rarely discussed facet of Appalachia: the production of the atomic bomb at Oak Ridge, Tenn., and the effect of this secret-ridden "town" on the families who came from the region to live there. We need more books like Gloria Houston's *My Great Aunt Arizona* (HarperCollins 1992) which shows the grace and dignity of a North Carolina teacher whose community *valued* education. We need recognition for Appalachian writers such as George Ella Lyon whose *Borrowed Children* (Orchard 1988) reminds that we do not lose our selves when we give up some of our myths.

Roberta Herrin's review of children's liteature, "Appalachian Books for All Children" was published in *Now and Then*'s Childhood in Appalachia issue, spring 1987. Since that volume is out of print, *Now and Then* will provide a copy of the article to anyone requesting it and sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to Box 70556 ETSU, Johnson City TN 37614-0556.

Roberta T. Herrin is Associate Professor of English at East Tennessee State University. She is a 1992-93 recipient of a Howard Foundation Fellowship from Brown University which gives her a sabbatical to conduct research in Appalachian children's literature.

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Looking up Appalachia

Mark Ellis

A librarian checks out the reference books—and is appalled at what he finds.

During the past decade, recognition of the cultural diversity of the United States has profoundly changed education at all levels. Many newer reference books are careful to show the complexity and richness of various cultures. However, this thoughtfulness has not consistently been applied to Appalachia. Reference works are often guilty of portraying Appalachians in a manner in which they would never dream of describing any other group. Librarian Mark Ellis examined reference materials and wrote this report.

Let us suppose a student has been given the task of writing a short report on the culture of the Appalachian region. There are a number of highly regarded reference works to which he or she can turn. By and large, the general encyclopedias describe the region geographically with only a limited discussion of the history or cultures existing there. *World Book* (1990 edition) includes sections on "Physical Features," "Economic Importance," "Recreation and Wildlife" and "History." Theirs is, on the whole, a fairly balanced, though brief, discussion. *Encyclopedia Americana* (1991 edition) includes a geographical article under the heading "Appalachian Mountains" and another under "Appalachia" which discusses the region in connection with the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965. Neither article can be said to offer the popular stereotypes.

The article in the 1988 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* on "Appalachian Mountains" does contain a mention of culture towards the end of the mostly geographical description. In discussing the physical isolation of the region, the writer offers the brief, somewhat ambiguous statement: "Consequently, Southern highlanders developed a distinctive culture characterized by handicrafts, ballads, and folklore."

Collier's Encyclopedia (1987 edition) includes an extensive article under "Appalachian Mountain System," outlining the region's geographical, agricultural and economic importance. Its only reference to culture is the familiar, romantic statement: "In the coves and valley settlements some remnants of Elizabethan language, songs, and customs still prevail." While these last two articles do not present the cultures of the Appalachian region in an overtly negative light, they offer the student little more than well-worn cliches.

In order to find a more in-depth discussion of Appalachian culture, the student might look further, into the specialized subject encyclopedias. Some offer little more than the general reference works. *The Dictionary of American History* (1976 edition) provides a brief, but mostly balanced article on Appalachia though there are references to the isolation of the region that are of questionable accuracy.

Like the general encyclopedias, *The Encyclopedia of the South (1985)* gives a largely geographical description with brief mention of the region's commercial importance. Strangely, it also includes a photograph of an elderly woman holding a woven bedspread of the type sold by itinerant weavers during the 19th century. The caption reads: "Primitive textile industry in the Appalachian Mountains of Arkansas." The purpose of this photograph remains obscure as neither Arkansas nor "primitive textile industry" are mentioned in the accompanying article.

The *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980) does one of the best jobs of describing the region. There appears to be a determination to base the description of "Appalachians" on statistical information and, using this information, to disprove some of the popular assumptions about Appalachian folk culture. The authors maintain, for example, that "although the region has been romanticized by missionaries and local-color writers as an 'arrested frontier,' it has never been as isolated as is popularly believed." They mention the publication in East Tennessee of the nation's first abolitionist newspaper and the long history of migration to and from the region. They even call into question the idea of Southern Appalachia as a distinctive cultural region, stating in their conclusion that "for the majority of the region's people, Appalachia has never been as important a symbol of identity as family, community, county, or even state and nation."

Possibly the worst job of defining Appalachia is done by the *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. Volume 1, published in 1991, received favorable reviews and is probably as widely available in libraries as the *Harvard Encyclopedia*. Unfortunately, the article on Appalachian culture is little more than a compendium of negative stereotypes. In discussing the language of Appalachia, the author makes the rather insulting statement: "Appalachians speak a regional dialect of English that is described by some as being difficult for outsiders to understand." In reference to the kinship system, there is the assertion that "marriages are often contracted when the individuals are quite young, and they are usually locally endogamous, if not within the 'clan'." Should the Appalachian couple start a family then "there are six or seven children in the average family, although families with ten or more children are not uncommon." Most alarming of all, "inbreeding is reported to be very common."

Appalachian neighborhoods are reported here to be clannish affairs where residents "usually share a church, school, and grist mill," and where "disputes often

Encyclopedia Britannica: *"Southern highlanders developed a distinctive culture characterized by handicrafts, ballads, and folklore."*

force individuals to side with their family and grudges can run deep." The religion of the Appalachians is described as fundamentalist: "Basic characteristics include a puritanical sense of morality, biblical fundamentalism, revivalism, fatalism, and a clergy that differs from the laity only in the extent of its zeal for universal salvation." Conversion experiences occur at summer revivals "which include spirited preaching, hymn singing that builds in intensity to the point of trance, hand waving toward heaven, speaking in tongues, and faith healing."

Given that none of the remarks quoted here seems to be backed by statistics or research, there are, within this imaginative description, several rather confusing statements regarding the extent of Appalachian culture. At the beginning of the article, we read that "although these rural people are only a minority of the regional population, the region has long been defined in terms of their traditional culture." Further on is the remark that "in the 1980's little of the traditional culture survives, save that which is exhibited for tourists." These last two statements seem to suggest that an entire region is yoked with a nonexistent folk "culture" consisting of a jumble of negative stereotypes.

Though published earlier, in 1979, the *Encyclopedia of Southern History* does a much better job on the whole than the *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. Henry Shapiro's article, "Appalachia," traces the way the region has been defined, beginning with the local-color writers in the 1870s through recent views of Appalachia as "America's victim." Calling into question the idea of Appalachian otherness, he states that "the social and economic characteristics of the region are not subject to systematic statement, for they are as varied as those of any other region."

The *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* is another recent entry in the reference books looking at culture from an up-to-date perspective. It appeared in 1989 with a good deal of popular press hoopla as well as scholarly praise. Its editors offer an examination of southern culture arranged in thematic areas under such headings as ethnic life, the mythic south, women's life, and religion. As one would expect, significant sections are devoted to Appalachia. These articles, on the whole, attempt a balanced, objective description of the regional culture; however, there is inconsistency apparent when a theme is traced through a number of articles. Henry Shapiro's article on "Appalachian Myth" in the chapter "Mythic South" is a good place to begin because he has outlined the assumptions behind the myth as well as the additional images the myth has generated. The assumptions are based on the idea that the mountain people, their environment, their culture, and their economic and social conditions are the same throughout the six-state region. Among the mythic images are the following: "Appalachia is the opposite of America: the mountain economy is primitive; the mountaineers are a survival of America's pioneer population. . . the mountaineers are a folk and their culture a folk culture. . . Appalachia is a pocket of poverty; Appalachia has been victimized by outside (American) interests. . .the mountaineers when leaving the region retain their culture and thus become aliens in a strange land and among a peculiar people."

Several of the other articles dealing with Appalachia are consistent in contradicting these mythic images. William Turner's article on Black Appalachians offers some interesting data regarding the extent and importance of the African-American population in the region. Similarly the articles "Appalachian Women," "Appalachian Literature" and "Industrialization in Appalachia" present balanced, well-documented discussions. Unfortunately, other articles rework the mythic images into reasons for the problems and peculiarities of the region. The supposed isolation of the area's inhabitants is a common theme. For example, the article "Mountain Culture" states that during the 19th century "the mountains remained an isolated enclave of plain folk." In the article "Exploitation of Appalachia" we read that "although Appalachian states are wealthy in resources, they lack locally available capital, adequate infrastructure, and access to the best lands; and there is a lack of income for goods and services. Quality health care, for example, is absent in Appalachia, as is quality education." The article "Appalachian Religion" defines the familiar features — revivals, foot washing, etc. This article states that the mountains provided "a discrete and, for much of American history, isolated landscape in which distinctive religious expression could grow."

As we have seen, Christianity in Appalachia can be presented as one of the more interesting and bizarre elements of the local culture. The *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*, published in 1988, unfortunately, does not dispel the inaccuracies. After an encouraging start that mentions the large number of denominations present in the region, the article lumps them all together under the term "Appalachian religion." Features of this religion include foot washing, which, according to the author, is "rather

Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: *"Quality health care is absent in Appalachia, as is quality education."*

Encyclopedia of World Cultures: *Appalachian neighborhoods are reported here to be clannish affairs where residents "usually share a church, school, and grist mill," and where "disputes often force individuals to side with their family and grudges can run deep."*

widely practiced" and such festive occasions as homecomings and reunions. Regarding music, we learn that "rarely are hymns sung; classical hymnody is not popular in the area nor is its more staid mode sufficiently expressive to suit Appalachian tastes." The style of preaching is described as a rapid singsong offensive to the outsider's ear, and yet "this style of preaching is assessed by many Appalachian people as 'real,' all other modes being regarded as alien, perhaps also cold and unspiritual."

Clearly, a student gathering information from these reference encyclopedias will find a mixed bag of stereotype, opinion and serious research on the cultures of the Appalachian region. Since most reference book articles do not represent original research but are derived from work often published years ago, these articles sometimes bear the stamp of outmoded beliefs and stereotypes. Because the appearance of these stereotypes in serious-looking volumes in library reference rooms lends them an air of wisdom and authority, it is important that we be aware of what may be hidden away in these authorities. It is also important that we demand of publishers that the books they publish on culture be based on current research and not the fictions and stereotypes which have grown up over the last two centuries.

Mark Ellis grew up near Johnson City, Tenn. After an extended sojourn in Illinois, where he earned a Ph.D. in German, he returned to become the reference librarian in the Sherrod Library at East Tennessee State University.

Writers and Photographers

Now and Then is seeking work for its fall issue on Appalachian storytelling. Please send query (for articles, interviews) by June 1, manuscripts (short stories, essays) and photos by July 1 to Pat Arnow, editor, ETSU Box 70556, Johnson City TN 37614-0556. Send no more than five poems (which for this theme should tell a story or be about storytelling) to Jo Carson, poetry editor, at the same address. All work should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Send an SASE for guidelines and upcoming themes.

Refuse to Stand Silently By: An Oral History of Grass Roots Activism in America, *1921 -1964*

edited by Eliot Wigginton

Doubleday, New York 1991
$25 (hardcover)

This book is about ordinary kinds of people like the ones Flannery O'Connor depicted in her short story, "Revelation." They will be invited to enter heaven first when the day of judgment comes, much to the shock and dismay of the conventionally "good" people who will have to wait at the back of the line for their turn.

The people in the book are not the sort who were held in high esteem or even thought of as particularly important by those respectable representatives of the status quo who opposed the labor union, civil rights and anti-war movements of this century. And yet, these "movement people" (as Julian Bond calls them) are now being recognized as true heroes and heroines of the modern era.

Eliot Wigginton has composed a very personal story of the work and accomplishments of 15 movement people who were associated to varying degrees with Myles Horton and Highlander Center. Some of the names are now widely known — Andrew Young, Julian Bond, Pete Seeger and Rosa Parks. Other names would be known primarily by fellow activists or by readers of past books about Highlander — Don West, Septima Clark, Bernice Robinson, Dorothy Cotton and E. D. Nixon. Still others may be new to most except for friends and insiders — Ralph Tefferteller, Lucille Thornburgh, Ralph Helstein and Zilla Hawes Daniel. And two have achieved notoriety through their writing — Studs Terkel and May Justus.

By his own account, Wigginton wanted to go beyond the public role each of these people played to gain an understanding of their backgrounds and formative influences. He wanted to know where their courage came from and about "the source of the values that ultimately lead to that very private, personal, and frightening decision to act instead of withdrawing." As an educator, he was especially interested in how the people were shaped by their schooling and favorite teachers.

Wigginton amassed a wealth of interview material, which he eventually trimmed down and organized chronologically into chapters dealing with childhood influences on becoming an activist, the founding of the Highlander Folk School and each subsequent decade of social struggle from the 1940s through the 1960s.

The result is a valuable addition to the literature on social activism in the South. It gives much-needed attention to the foot soldiers and lieutenants of social change rather than featuring only the famous leaders.

Other strong points are the book's readability and organization. By weaving parts of individual stories into each chapter, Wigginton creates lively conversations along common themes that give the reader a sense of continuity.

By way of criticism, the focus of the book is actually more narrow than the subtitle indicates. This is more about the friends and protégés of Myles Horton and Highlander than about "social activism in America." Thus, for example, Native American and women's issues are hardly addressed at all.

The other major criticism has to do with the inherent limits of relying exclusively on oral history both to recover the past and to analyze it for general truths which can be applied today. It is true that oral history is better than empirical methods in communicating personal experience. Oral history is also a much-needed corrective to conventional history because it includes information and perspectives from ordinary or controversial individuals and from powerless, disenfranchised groups which would otherwise be ignored or distorted.

On the other hand, oral history by itself can be just as incomplete, inaccurate and biased as more conventional methods. Consider the question of childhood origins and motivational dynamics behind a life of activism, for instance. Personal recollections, like good fish stories, lend themselves to mythmaking. More objective analysis can be found in the psychological literature

on political development and activism.

It is unclear at this point what impact, if any, Wigginton's recent and well-publicized personal problems (see essay on page 39) will have on the reception of the book by the reading public. Considering the importance of library and school purchases to such a book's success, my guess is the impact is likely to be negative. This is unfortunate, since Wigginton himself rarely speaks but allows those interviewed to tell their own story in their own voice.

The book concludes with a brief update about the Highlander Center by its current director, John Gaventa. Wigginton is donating the royalties from the sale of *Refuse to Stand Silently By* to Highlander. The remarkable stories he shares reinforce our awareness that Highlander has been and continues to be a place of inspiration and empowerment for positive social change in America. I hope the book sells well.

—Guy L. Osborne

*Larry Osborne reviewed **Highlander: No Ordinary School** by John M. Glen in Fall 1988 and **The Long Haul** by Myles Horton in Fall 1990. He is from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., not far from Highlander Center.*

Looking Back: Wise County in the Early Years

Lonesome Pine Office on Youth
PO Box 1677
Wise, Virginia 24293
1992
$35 (hardcover) (add $3 postage)

The premise: keep kids off drugs and alcohol by giving them something interesting to do. The project: get a group of more than 30 students from Wise County Public Schools' Youth Services Program to spend over two years collecting, developing and enlarging photographs of their home county. The product: a book of more than 500 photographs taken in Wise County, Va., from the late 1800s to the 1940s.

Whether these youth learned the value of sobriety only they can say. But the book is ample evidence that they learned much about how their county changed in the first half of the 20th century. Photographs of fields, woods and streams are far less copious than pictures of the coal camps, coke ovens and logging stands which supplanted them. The steep mountains did not protect the area from plasticization, as evidenced by a 1920s photo of the old Norton football field which, the caption reports, is now the location of Big Lots and Pizza Hut.

Captions are, for the most part, disappointingly brief, often giving only a location and date. One would gladly sacrifice some photos for more detailed stories about the remaining pictures.

Some of the people pictured bear names that are still common in the county: Mullins and Robinette, Brickey and Sturgill. Most of them are not smiling. Even the children stare into the camera with what appears to be patient resignation. This can be attributed partly to the long exposure time necessary to take a photograph then. But one suspects the serious demeanor is also due to long days of unrelenting hard work. In one photo, a miner bends to lift an enormous chunk of coal. In another, a woman who looks years older than her husband (but probably isn't) is surrounded by her solemn children. One photo shows a group of boys in mining garb. Their sons and grandsons may still be working in coal mines in Southwest Virginia.

Those teenagers who now hang out on the sidewalks of downtown Big Stone Gap on weekends are carrying on a tradition. A photo in the book shows men gathered in front of a general store there in 1908. Another group of men lounges downtown in the 1880s. Aside from hanging out, leisure pursuits in those days included music and baseball. According to a caption, every Wise County town had its own band during the early 1900s, and intense rivalries existed among coal camp baseball teams (a subject explored in Denise Giardina's excellent novel, *Storming Heaven*).

Innovative educational projects like this book were surely uncommon in some of the schools depicted here. They range from wooden one-room schools to large brick high schools. Early pictures show austere athletic teams, serious graduating classes, a glee club devoid of glee in its demeanor. In later photos, children at recess are lively and smiling. Girls dance at a drugstore after school in the 1940s. To which generation is the current crop of students most similar, one wonders.

The quality of composition and printing among the photographs varies greatly, indicating that some were taken by artists and some by mere recorders. Unfortunately, one of the poorer pictures was chosen for the dust jacket. Though all the photos are interesting (at least historically), those by professional photographer Picture Man Mullins are truly engaging in their clarity and kinetic suggestion. Water ripples tangibly around an elderly man just moments before he is baptized. Snakes writhe in the hands of a worshipper. An elderly woman leans slowly into her husband's shoulder as he sits beside her.

The most evocative picture, however, is of three new trucks lined up outside Long's Show Room. Beside each truck is a driver, and each driver props one foot on the running board and one elbow on the ledge of the open truck window. The images of the brick showroom building, the trucks and the drivers are sharply defined. But on the sidewalk a lone pedestrian is a blur as he walks in the opposite direction, toward the past.

The book is divided into sections on transportation, industry, schools and natural beauty, among others. Some photographs are not in the most appropriate section, and each section would be more effective if attention were paid to chronology. The students may have learned pride in their history but, alas, did not learn pride in being meticulous. There are errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling, and one photograph is printed twice. Otherwise the pages are well laid out, and the appetite for more history is whetted. Projects like this one may help more kids Just Say Know.

— Laurene Scalf

*Laurene Scalf, assistant editor of **Now and Then**, spent her first nine years in Wise and Lee counties.*

Reviews

The Unquiet Earth
by Denise Giardina
Norton, New York 1992
$22.95 (hardcover)

With *The Unquiet Earth* Denise Giardina brings up to date the chronicle of the Appalachian coalfields that she began with her award-winning 1987 novel, *Storming Heaven*. Readers who were caught up in the lives of characters like Carrie Bishop, Rondal Lloyd and Rosa Angelelli will find this sequel interesting in a special way, but readers unfamiliar with the earlier book will not be at a loss. *The Unquiet Earth* is an absorbing novel which doesn't depend on its predecessor.

The four major sections of *The Unquiet Earth* are narrated by six first-person speakers who carry us along from the 1930s to the 1990s. Although most of the sections are noted with dates, and each of the voices has its own distinctive flavor, the frequent changes in point of view (66 shifts in all) demand close attention. The reader is rewarded with a kaleidoscopic view of 20th century life in Appalachia in all its complexity.

The novel opens with the voice of Dillon Freeman, the son of Carrie Bishop Freeman and Rondal Lloyd. At 14 years of age, Dillon is a rebel; he cherishes the memory of his father's struggle to bring the union to the coalfields, and his mother has taught him to question established authority. "Nobody admits it," he says, "but school is to teach you how to get bossed." "How to get bossed" is a lesson Dillon refuses to learn. Instead, he leads his union brothers in a strike against the American Coal Company when it cuts their hours and their medical benefits. He even takes on the union leadership itself when the union sells out to the company owners. Like his father, Dillon doesn't hesitate to risk his life for what he feels is right. He is equally passionate and courageous in his personal relationships. Throughout his life he loves Rachel Honaker although both custom and law forbid their marriage because she is his first cousin.

Rachel is attracted to Dillon, too, but she is not like him. Taught by her mother, Flora (Carrie's sister), to value propriety and reputation, Rachel wants to live a conventional life. After World War II she gives up her career in nursing and marries a man she doesn't really love ("everyone said it was time for women to settle down and rebuild the home"), but the marriage brings her no happiness. Nor does it bring her the child she longs for — until after she begins her affair with Dillon. She can no more be subversive than Dillon can be conventional, so the tie is a painful one for them both. Rachel loves and hates Dillon, for he complicates her life by repeatedly challenging the difficult compromises she has made. He urges her to acknowledge publicly the extraordinary bond that exists between them. Like Heathcliff and Catherine, the ill-starred lovers in *Wuthering Heights* whom not even death could divide, Dillon and Rachel seem fated to make of one another's lives a glorious misery.

Jackie Honaker, Rachel's daughter, is the central character of *The Unquiet Earth* and the one clearly derived from Giardina's own experiences. Born in the early 1950s, Jackie grows up in the West Virginia coalfields. She dreams of being a writer but doubts that she can because "real writers live in New York apartments or sit at sidewalk cafes in Paris," and "nobody cares to hear about hillbillies." She adores Paul McCartney and has a serious crush on Tom Kolwiecki (a VISTA worker who is so successful in organizing the local people that the FBI comes to arrest him). After she earns a college degree and studies for a year in England, she moves to Washington, where she works as an assistant to a member of Congress. When finally she comes home to Appalachia, she learns that she *can* be a "real writer." But she also learns that the utmost sacrifice and dedication are not enough to prevent catastrophe when the unscrupulous hold power over the land and its people.

Mostly *The Unquiet Earth* is about the coalfields of Appalachia, where the struggle for power involves issues of land ownership and use, fair employment practices and safe working conditions for miners. But Giardina clearly recognizes that "man's inhumanity to man" is not unique to any region or people. The Japanese skull given to Rachel as a souvenir by her wartime fiancee serves as a reminder of the dehumanizing effects of war and racism. Tom's stories about torture and murder in Honduras are reminders of the appalling lack of human rights in Central America. And Rachel's description of the "perpetual soup" made from vegetables salvaged from the dumpster behind a Washington, D.C., Safeway recalls the plight of the hungry and homeless. Giardina is a storyteller, not a preacher, but the moral imperative in her work rings clear. Terrible things happen when people forget or ignore their responsibility to respect and care for each other, when the desire for power of relatively few wealthy people is unrestrained.

To the extent that *The Unquiet Earth* portrays the devastation of a land and its people, it offers a dark vision, but the darkness is not unrelieved. Greed and injustice flourish, but so do courage and humor and compassion. The world according to Giardina is a treacherous place, where sudden floods can sweep away the unwary, where the most we can expect is a warning that the bomb is about to explode. But it is also a place where a crowd of women armed with willow switches can defeat an army of coal truck drivers, and where the memory of love can make even torture bearable. Showing us a world where horrible things happen, especially to those who lack the power to protect themselves, Giardina offers no easy or certain solutions. She doesn't presume to have the answers, but she asks important questions. And she challenges each of us to fight with all our strength against the darkness.

—Laurie Lindberg

Laurie Lindberg teaches English at Pikeville College in Kentucky.

> You learn spelling rules and grammar rules and that the way you talked all your life is ignorant even though it seems to suit most people fine, and when Teacher goes on and says we live in a free country it's just a little hard to believe. Nobody admits it but school is to teach you how to get bossed.
>
> —Dillon in Denise Giardina's *The Unquiet Earth*

Adora Dupree

Music

"The Book Rap" comes from performer, storyteller and educator Adora Dupree. Dupree is originally from Knoxville, Tenn., and is a member of the Carpetbag Theatre Company. She is presently doing a lot of storytelling and developing new material while working on her masters degree in storytelling at East Tennessee State University.

"Praise" poetry is part of an African oral tradition that Dupree learned from Gcina Mhlophe from Johannesburg, South Africa. It's a way of honoring ancestors, the creator, and all of life. And, it's a way to tell a story in the African tradition. Several popular rappers including Hammer use this praise poetry format.

Dupree uses praise poetry in workshops she does in the schools. It helps children develop their own storytelling writing voice. "I had been listening to my own kids playing a lot of rap music. I thought it would be perfect to set the words 'In Praise of Poetry' to a rap beat. I had been challenged by some of my high school students to write them a praise poem. So, I wrote them one in their own idiom.

"When the kids hear 'The Book Rap,' they brighten up. I've found the students as well as the teachers really like it."

— Ed Snodderly

In Praise of Books - The Book Rap

"The Book Rap" should be "sung" in a moderate 4/4 time. Create your own beat — perhaps by snapping your fingers. Dupree performs this song with a drum. Simply speak the song using the dots above the words as a rhythmic guide. Sometimes you will have to rush a word or two (or slow one down) to get it in place. If you are a teacher, you may want to get your students to show you how to perform this song. Remember — it's only rap if you put an attitude into it.

Introduction: Jambo

I love books and hope you do, too.
If you share my love, then this poem's for you:

The Book Rap:

I learned to read at the age of three.
I loved books and books loved me.
There's nothing in the world I would rather do
Than read a good book through and through.

Novels, short stories, science fiction, mystery
Romances, biography, I even read the dictionary.
Newspapers, magazines, billboard signs,
Letters, maps, the Bible; I read all the time.

My mother wanted me to wash dishes as a youth,
Behind the dish pan I would prop my book.
Leaning on the counter, reading every line
Doing the dishes took a mighty long time.

Sometimes to read, I'll stay awake
Till 5 a.m., but it's hard to take
My eyes feeling so full of sand,
And I finally fall asleep book in hand.

I have books on the shelves, books on the floor,
Books in the kitchen, books by the door,
Books in the bathroom, on the bed and TV.
For I'd rather read than watch you see.

Books have information, history.
Books can help you trace your genealogy.
Math, science, music are things books can teach.
Books can help you grow beyond your reach.

And so I encourage you, my friend,
To pick up a book, turn the page and begin
To read, to learn, to enjoy the story.
In books you can find your hope and glory.

Thanks to writers who plant the seed.
Thanks to teachers who taught me to read.
Thanks to me for my willingness to look
In book after book after book after book.

IN PRAISE OF BOOKS
by Adora L. Dupree
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National Archives

Students in a one-room schoolhouse, Breathitt County, Ky., 1940. Photo by Marion Post Wolcott. *Library of Congress*

NOW AND THEN

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